

**WOMEN IN THE CCAP NKHOMA SYNOD: A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL
STUDY OF THEIR LEADERSHIP ROLES**

By

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**DISSERTATION PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY (PRACTICAL THEOLOGY)**



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DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for obtaining any qualification.

Signature.....

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ABSTRACT

“Leave her alone, why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me ... I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her” (Mark 14:6, 9). This is how Jesus Christ perceives woman; with gratitude, dignity and respect. Unfortunately, women have often been ill-treated, discriminated against and even oppressed by her own fellow human beings of the opposite sex just because she was born a woman. Many women have asked themselves, “Why was I born a woman?” Questions such as these motivated the researcher to carry out this current study on women

The purpose of this dissertation is to: (1) Determine through an in depth literary analysis factors that have contributed to the desperate position of women leadership in CCAP Nkhoma Synod. (2) To conduct empirical research in the different congregations of the Synod among members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, church elders and reverends. (3) To explore a new model of reading and interpreting New Testament texts with regards to addressing the problem of the lack of women in leadership positions in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.

The research has shown that women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod are denied leadership positions because of historical, cultural and biblical factors. Historically, the first Dutch Reformed missionaries who came to Malawi used a patriarchal type of leadership, which sidelined women from leadership positions. Culturally, it was discovered that people brought their cultural beliefs along with them to church, that a man is superior, powerful, respectful and a controller; while woman are considered to be weak, inferior and submissive. Through Social Identity Theory, it was discovered that these beliefs and actions of considering themselves to be superior and better than women, were influenced by aspects such as self-categorization and stereotyping. This means that the moment men categorized themselves as reverends and elders, they automatically compare themselves with the other group, in this case, “*Chigwirizano cha amai*”. This resulted in stereotyping women as weak and powerless, not qualified to carry out leadership roles.

The research has shown that the biblical factor is the main contributor as to why the church has silenced women up till now. Texts like 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 have been used to oppress women from exercising their godly given leadership gifts and skills. This is why a new theory of interpreting the Word of God has been suggested in this dissertation. It

is called the “Multi-dimensional Approach”. This new approach¹ will be achieved by re-reading the Scriptures through three aspects, namely, the literary, social-historical and theological-rhetorical aspects. The researcher remains optimistic that through this process of re-reading the texts, the Chewa culture and missionary history, as well as people’s mindsets, attitudes and beliefs will change in favour of women leadership.

This research sought to answer the following questions: (1) To what extent are historical and cultural factors, and particularly factors pertaining to the interpretation of the Bible, responsible for the lack of women in leadership positions in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod? (2) Complex as it may be to explore and measure the impact of these factors, would it be possible to substantiate and verify such influences empirically? (3) Once this has been done, would it for instance be possible to identify alternative readings of history, culture and the Bible? These three questions were very crucial in that they guided the researcher to know the real problem and how this problem can be solved.

¹ A Multi-dimensional approach is a new approach to most of the Christians in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod; as the one-dimensional approach is most commonly used.

OPSOMMING

“Laat staan haar,” het Jesus gesê. “Waarom maak julle dit vir haar moeilik?” Sy het ’n goeie daad aan my gedoen... Dit verseker Ek julle: Oral waar die evangelie in die hele wêreld verkondig word, sal daar ook vertel word wat sy gedoen het, tot herinnering van haar.” (Mark 14:6, 9). Dit is die manier waarop Jesus na vroue gekyk het, met dankbaarheid, waardigheid en respek. Ongelukkig is vroue dikwels sleg behandel, teen gediskrimineer en selfs onderdruk deur manspersone, net omdat hulle as vroue gebore is. Menige vrou het haarself al gevra, “Waarom is ek as vrou gebore?” Vrae soos hierdie het die navorser gemotiveer om hierdie studie te onderneem.

Die doel van hierdie navorsing is: (1) Om deur ’n literatuurstudie die faktore wat tot die desperate situasie van vroue leierskap in die CCAP Nkhoma Sinode bygedra het, te ondersoek. (2) In empiriese navorsing onder lede van die sogenaamde *Chigwirizano cha amai* (vroue groep), ouderlinge en predikante van verskillende gemeentes van die Sinode te doen. (3) Om ’n nuwe model vir die lees en interpreteer van die Nuwe Testament met die oog daarop om die probleem van die afwesigheid van vroue in posisies van leierskap in die CCAP Nkhoma Sinode te ontwikkel.

Die navorsing het getoon dat vroue in die CCAP Nkhoma Sinode uit posisies van leierskap gehou word as gevolg van historiese, kulturele en Bybelse faktore. Histories het die eerste Nederlandse sendelinge wat na Malawi gekom het ’n patriargale vorm van leierskap gevestig wat vroue van die begin af uitgesluit het. In kulturele verband is daar gevind dat die mense hulle tradisionele kulturele oortuigings ook in die kerk ingedra het, soos dat die man verhewe is bo die vrou, magtig en in beheer, terwyl vroue as swakker beskou word, minderwaardig en passief. Met behulp van Sosiale Identiteitsteorie is gevind dat hierdie oortuigings en handeling van mans dat hulle meerderwaardig en beter as vroue is, deur aspekte soos self-kategorisering en stereotipering beïnvloed is. Dit beteken onder andere dat die moment wat mans hulleself as predikante en ouderlinge kategoriseer, hulle onmiddellik hulleself met ander groepe vergelyk, in die geval die *Chigwirizano cha amai*. Dit dra tot verdere stereotipering van vroue by, naamlik dat hulle swak en magteloos is en daarom nie vir posisies van leierskap geskik is nie.

Die navorsing het getoon dat die faktor wat die grootste bydrae gelewer het tot die rede waarom die kerk die vroue se stemme stil gemaak het, verband hou met die wyse waarop die Bybel gelees word. Tekste soos 1 Kor 14:34-35 en 1 Tim 2:11-12 is dikwels gebruik om vroue daarvan te weerhou om hulle God-gegewe gawes van leierskap te ontwikkel en uit te leef. Dit is waarom ’n nuwe model vir die interpretasie van die Skrif voorgestel word, wat uit literêre,

sosiohistoriese en teologies-retoriese aspekte bestaan. Die navorser bly hoopvol dat deur 'n herlees van die tekste die Chewa kultuur en missionêre verlede, asook die ingesteldheid van mense, hulle houdings en oortuigings ten gunste van vroue in posisies van leierskap sal verander.

Die navorsing het gepoog om die volgende vrae te beantwoord: (1) Tot watter mate het historiese en kulturele faktore en dan spesifiek faktore wat met die interpretasie van die Bybel verband hou, tot die gebrek aan vroue in posisies van leierskap in die CCAP Nkhoma Sinode, bygedra? (2) Om ondersoek te doen tot watter mate hierdie faktore ook deur middel van empiriese navorsing bevestig kon word, wel bewus van die kompleksiteit van die situasie. (3) Om op grond van laasgenoemde ondersoekend te kyk na moontlike alternatiewe maniere waarop die geskiedenis, die kultuur en die Bybel gelees kan word? Hierdie drie vrae was voortdurend in die gedagtes van die navorser en het die dryfkrag gegee in die navorser se soeke na die onderliggende redes wat tot die sentrale probleem bygedra het.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved mum, Rosemary Jere, and my three God loving daughters: Thokozani, Thandizo and Temwani. Your outstanding love for the Lord is my joy, that I will always cherish in my life and is the reason for my unceasing praise to my God almighty. My prayer for you all is that you grow up to be women of strong faith and valour; who will use your godly given gifts and skills to the glory of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen!

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² I am speechless for all the good things you have done for me.

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³ What is implied here is that one pillar cannot uphold the whole roof of the building.

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ABBREVIATIONS

1. ATR	African Traditional Religious
2. CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
3. CCA	Chigwirizano Cha Amai
4. CEC	Central Executive Committee
5. DRCM	Dutch Reformed Church Mission
6. HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
7. ICT	Institute for Contextual Theology
8. JMCTI	Josophatmwale Theological Institute
9. KD	Kairos Document
10. KS	Kabugwe ka Synod
11. NS	Nkhoma Synod
12. NT	New Testament
13. OT	Old Testament
14. RC	Roman Catholic
15. RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
16. SA	South Africa
17. SCOM	Student Christian Organization of Malawi
18. SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
19. S	Synod (minutes)
20. SIT	Social Identity Theory
21. SSTT	Sunday School Task Team

CHEWA GLOSSARY

Chigwirizano cha amai	Women's Guild or Women's Union
Malongosoledwe a chigwirizano cha amai	Rules and regulations of Women's Guild
Zolamulira	The rules and regulations of Nkhoma Synod
Amkhalapakati	Male representatives of Women's Guild
Ndalamazamafuta	Women Guild's annual contribution
Ndalamazachitukuko	Development fund
Ndalamazachifundo	Compassionate fund
Chilangizo cha atsikana	Christian initiation rite for girls
Bungwe lotsogolera (moderamen)	The Executive Committee of Nkhoma Synod
Bungwe lotsogolera la chigwirizano	Executive Committee of Women's Guild
Nyau	Male masked secret society

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

For over forty-five years the issue of women in the Church⁴ of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Malawi has been a very big one. Divisions within churches, organizations and even in families have occurred as a result of these women issues (Synod minutes, 1965). Husbands have divorced their spouses and vice versa on the grounds of who has the authority and how that authority has been used (Gondwe, 2009:24-31). It has therefore become important to re-evaluate the status and position of women in Malawian churches and society in general, and the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod in particular.

In terms of population both in the church and even country wide, the Malawi Population Data Sheet (2012)⁵ shows that the number of women outnumbers that of the men. For example, in 2012 women were seven million and seven hundred thousand while men were seven million and one hundred thousand. Considering the numerical growth of women in the church and their potential, the researcher is convinced that unless the issue at hand is discussed and recommendations made, the church may continue to regard women as being inferior and of little importance in the church. It is therefore of paramount importance to understand the history and current situation of Malawian women in the church and society. Therefore, the researcher will focus on the role of women in the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod (of which she is a member), with a specific focus on female leadership roles. The researcher has targeted this Synod for three reasons:

1.1.1. Interpretation of Scripture

The first reason has to do with the interpretation of Scripture. Out of the three Synods in Malawi (Livingstonia in the North, Blantyre in the South and Nkhoma in the

⁴ Phiri (1997:50) says the debate on women leadership started way behind in 1966.

⁵ This group is mainly responsible for Malawi's population growth in all three regions of Malawi. Besides this it is also responsible with the age structure where they censor which age group is the poorest. It also looks into the issues like gender based violence, water and sanitation, family planning and maternal and child health, HIV & AIDS, etc.

Central); but also among all churches in Malawi, it is the Nkhoma Synod that is well known for its strong roots in the Word of God.⁶

It has been nicknamed, *tcheni pa kalanka*, which literary means that the chain is fixed on its place or the chain is unmovable or intact. This implies that it is a Bible based Synod; nothing or nobody can move it from this basis.

It is a Synod that claims to be *doers* and not only *hearers* of the Word. It's here where the problem lies because the researcher and many other people are looking for new (life-giving) ways of interpreting the Word of God especially when it comes to the position and status of women in the church and the society. The researcher is of the opinion that if the church, *inter alia*, can use accountable methods of Bible interpretation, the status of women in the church can improve and the church can play an important role in mitigating the many problems being faced by women in our context, i.e. gender based violence, girl child education, HIV and AIDS, sexual abuse, etc. The interpretation of Scripture takes us to our second reason of why Nkhoma Synod is the target of this research. It is none else other than its focal point of centredness.

1.1.2. Strategic position

The second reason is the Synod's strategic position and its high numerical growth. In Malawi, the Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP is situated at the geographical and political centre of the country, where there is among other things the capital city, the parliament, government offices and etcetera. With these developments, it means this Synod of Nkhoma has the opportunity of reaching out with the Word of God to all different kinds of people of different nationalities, occupation, beliefs, statuses, etc. In terms of church membership, Nkhoma Synod surpasses all other Synods because although the southern region has the highest population in comparison to the central and northern regions, but when it comes to church membership it is the second because some of the districts like Mangochi, Machinga, Balaka and Zomba are the main

⁶ This information is not documented anywhere else but it is commonly spoken among Christians all over Malawi, especially among the three Synods.

centres of Islamic religion. The final reason of choosing Nkhoma Synod is the experience of the researcher. This is what the coming section is all about.

1.1.3. Experience of the researcher

The final reason has to do with the researcher's location. Being a member of the Nkhoma Synod herself, it will be easy for her to find out what and how the ministers, church elders, women, etc., think about women and listen to their arguments about the role of women in leadership. On the other hand, as a member of the Synod but also of the women's guild (*Chigwirizano*), it will give her uncomplicated access to the information since she is already familiar with the systems and knows the influential and strategic people to consult. After looking at the preamble, which among other things comprised of the three factors that led the researcher to choose Nkhoma Synod unlike any other Synods in Malawi, I now move on to the motivation of the researcher.

1.2. MOTIVATION OF THE RESEARCHER

There are mainly three factors that have motivated the researcher to undertake the current research.

1.2.1. Personal suffering and experience

The passion for the women of Malawi in general; and for the Nkhoma Synod in particular, has been there since my childhood. Coming from a patriarchal family, my mother and I, together with my sisters used the kitchen as a place for our meals; while my father and brothers ate on their own in the house. The best and a big portion of food was given to the men. I remember how I wished then to be a boy so that I could enjoy the best food.

Early in the morning we (the parents and children) would go to the garden. Upon our return, my mother (with a baby on her back) and I were expected to fetch and carry firewood, while my brothers and dad walked back home without carrying anything. To compound matters, upon arrival at home I was impelled to go fetch water for cooking at the well, while my mum was preparing the food. I therefore agree with Oduyoye (1997:131) who asserts, "So when a woman comes home from the field, however tired she may be, everybody in the family expects her to play the role of mother and wife with maximum efficiency."

During this time my dad and brothers were resting, waiting for their food and sometimes even complaining that we were taking too long. This type of life raised many questions as to why life was so hard for girls and women as compared to that of men? As I grew up, instead of things changing for the better, I discovered that it became tougher and tougher.

More rules and regulations were imposed on me than on my brothers. I was told to be at home at all times, except for when I was sent by my parents; while my brothers had all the freedom to go anywhere they wanted and come back home at any time they wanted. I was told to distance myself from my dad as a sign of respect but my brothers were allowed to be close to my mum.

This made me to hate myself even more and more for being born a girl and not a boy so that I too could enjoy the pleasures of going wherever I wanted to; doing whatever seemed good; and coming home anytime I desired. The joy of being close to my dad was something I missed and still live to regret. After the death of my father we went back to our home village where its life styles and beliefs almost destroyed my desire for school. My mum was stopped by my aunt from keeping *nsima*⁷(food) for me because it was not appropriate to keep food for a girl child, as she has to prepare it for herself. This was one way of discouraging me from progressing with school. With the boys a different set of rules applied. My brothers were given food and also more time for studies while I was busy helping my mum with house chores especially now that my dad was deceased. The boys were encouraged to study hard so that they should go to the university and thereafter secure good jobs like becoming doctors, pilots, high school teachers etc. I was taught not to bother with school, I just needed to get married and my husband would take care of me. This caused my mother to take all the money I inherited from my father and gave it to my brothers for school fees. After being frustrated in my own home and society, the only remaining hope for me was the church.

⁷ Nsima is the main staple food in Malawi, which is eaten at lunch and dinner with any kind of relish. It is made out of maize or cassava flour.

I started going to Sunday school at the age of five. I discovered that the majority of the teachers were girls and women for men considered teaching children as something to be avoided. In the church, women sat on their own, separated from men. Girls/women were to approach the pastor through the church elder (a man). This brought more frustration and led me to question the status of women both in the home, as well as in the churches. Beside my own life experience, I was also motivated by the way women are perceived not only in the church, but also in society. How women are perceived will be explained below.

1.2.2. The perception of the church and society towards women

As I continued to go to church, several issues stood out to me showing me the church's unfriendliness towards women. It did not provide a warm environment for women to participate freely. Some of these issues where justice is not observed are as follows:

2.3.1.1.Church discipline

The Nkhoma Synod has a church court where it disciplines its members when they have broken church rules and regulations. Here I discovered that the judges (church elders and deacons) favour men. For example, when a woman commits adultery, she is totally condemned and her husband is encouraged (though not directly) to divorce her but when the husband commits adultery, the wife is encouraged to forgive him and continue with the marriage⁸. This reminds me of those men who brought before Jesus a woman who was caught in the act of adultery for judgment but they did not bring the man who was with her (John 8:3-11).

With this type of judgment in the church (but also in the society at large)⁹ several women have been (and still are) suffering silently. This unfair treatment can result in the high rate of HIV and AIDS cases in the church and society because men know that even if they continue with an immoral life, still the wives will not divorce them.

⁸ There is a proverb in my local language, Chichewa, which goes like this, “Zisamakomere mbuzi kugunda galu, koma galu akagunda mbuzi nkumati walakwitsa”. This means that it should not be pleasing and justified for a goat to hit a dog; while it is considered wrong and strange for a dog to hit the goat. Judgement should not be based on gender biases. So the same, I believe justice should be applied to all, regardless of gender.

⁹ This applies to our church but also to other denominations and society in general.

Another area where women and girls have suffered injustice is in the field of theological training.

2.3.1.2. Theological training

I still remember how I, and other girls, were chased away from a homiletic class in 1996 simply because we were women. We were told that this subject was only for men, for it has to do with preaching, and not for women, as they are not entitled to preach. In the Nkhoma Synod, theological training and teaching is basically given by and done by men, even when qualified women are available. Women are only taught about cooking, how to welcome visitors in the home, how to care for their children and husbands and so forth. At Yoswa¹⁰, a school for women whose husbands are going through theological training, they mainly emphasize teaching home management without any reference to theology. A certain theologian's application as a lecturer at the theological school (Josophat Mwale Theological Institution) was turned down simply because she was a woman. This is what Mbugua (1994:61-63) calls 'social injustice,' where women are discriminated from job opportunities simply because they are women. To concur with Mbugua, Fiorenza & Collins (1985:xi) say that women theologians are being silenced, excluded, trivialised, and marginalised in the church because they are women.

The fact that church discipline and theological training favours men at the expense of women is a clear indication that women are not considered for leadership positions because some of these positions require theological training. The issue of leadership position is another motivating factor for doing this research. This will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

1.2.3. Leadership positions

It grieves my soul to see how women with potential are reduced to singing and sweeping in the church. I know that these activities are important, but I also think it is vital to utilize their godly given gifts. Because some congregations have not created opportunities for women to exercise their leadership roles freely, the church is filled

¹⁰ Yoswa is the name of the school where pastor's wives learn home management, handcraft, social work, baking and cooking, while their husbands are busy learning theology.

with a number of women choir groups, which most of the time just ends up in conflicts, divisions and competition.

This is a clear indication that women are eager to serve the Lord, but that opportunities in the church have been limited. The church has failed to recognize their potential and as a result has failed to equip them accordingly. It is observations such as these that have motivated the researcher to do research on the injustices of women in Malawi in general, and in the Nkhoma Synod in particular. Mbugua (1994:61) has defined injustice as referring to unfair or heavily biased treatment meted out to an individual or a specific group of people by the society in which they live, for example the African woman. The research problem is thus explained further below.

1.3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.3.1. General background to the research problem

The Nkhoma Synod is situated in the central region of Malawi, which is predominantly occupied by the Chewa people. Originally being a matrilineal society, Chewa women had total control of the rain shrines (religion) as mediums; they also had political leadership (Phiri, 2000:23). As such, the Chewa women were looked upon as the root of the lineage; and as the root they were seen as sacred vessels of life that were responsible for the continuation of the community. This means that the community's future and destiny was decisively dependent on them because in their fertile womb they carried both male and female (Phiri, 2000:36). Longwe (2007:19) says, "Fertility was therefore at the core of the Chewa female initiation rituals. The *anakungwi* (counsellors of initiations) as the custodians of the ancestral customs made sure that all necessary precautions were taken and taboos observed so as to ensure that nothing endangered their life.

As time passed, this matrilineal society gave in to a patrilineal type of leadership. Phiri (2000:36) talks about three factors that contributed to the destruction of the dignity of the Chewa women.

The first was the contribution of the slave trade in 1810, as men preferred to marry slave women who were more submissive to their husbands than strong and free Chewa women who were not as subordinate. To maintain their marriages, the Chewa women

became more submissive to their husbands. Doing so meant much of their power was reduced and invested in men.

Secondly, the matrilineal system declined because of foreign influences coming from patriarchal societies. Groups like the Swahili from the East Coast, the Chikunda from Mozambique and the Ngoni from South Africa settled among the Chewa of Dedza, Dowa and Nkhotakota. After being defeated by these groups, the Chewa started practising a patriarchal type of marriage, in which all authority is invested in the man.

Finally, the matrilineal system collapsed due to the arrival of the missionaries during the last quarter of the 19th century. They introduced Christianity as a male dominated religion. Anything incompatible with this perspective was crushed. Koevering (2005:28) says that this perspective was a result of the missionaries' arrogance and power, the innate superiority of the white man in the age of imperialism. All these years, since 1889 when the missionaries first came to the Nkhoma Synod; the Synod has maintained its stand as a male dominated institution.

Even though the Nkhoma Synod is mainly dominated by men the majority of its members are still women (70%). This is almost the same in Kenya where Masenya & Landman (1997, Introduction)¹¹ say:

If statistics were to be taken on the percentage of Bible readers and church membership in our country they would reveal that women, particularly African women, form the majority in both cases. Yet the Bible and the stories in the Bible have in most cases been interpreted for them by men, obviously from their own perspective.

The women are the most active members and are also more concerned with the issue of holistic ministry.¹² For example, it is the only group in the church that has the same structures as those of the Synod (the executive, presbytery and congregational committees). It is also the only group that effectively meets twice every month for preaching, praying, Bible study and social work. They hold an annual conference and are committed to teaching Sunday school (Malongosoledwe ndi Zopangana za Chigwirizano, 2007:2). In her description of women leaders, Willhauck (2001:95-

¹¹ This information is from the introduction where page number is not given.

¹² This is seen through their activities both in the church and society.

96)¹³ asserts that they help to embrace diversity, are process-oriented, focus on the big picture, collaboratively share information, while simultaneously have a concern for human relationships. Bishop Monterfiore (1978:15) comments: “Leaving women outside the priestly ministry the church is depriving itself of resources of deeply significant pastoral wisdom.” Looking at the commitment of these women to serving God one might be tempted to conclude that they (the women) are holding leadership positions in the church like ministers, church elders, deacons, etc. Unfortunately, the opposite is true because up till now there are no women ministers, very few church elders and deacons and their status as a whole has been undermined. This dominating role of men has not only affected women spiritually, but also physically, because they fear their own husbands; there is no mutual relationship, but is more like that of a boss and his followers. The researcher would therefore like to explore the cultural, historical and biblical factors, so as to find out if they are contributing to the problematic situation of women leaders in the Nkhoma Synod. I now visit the problem statement in the next section.

1.3.2. Problem Statement

A major challenge of this research is to determine the main factors contributing to the resistance of women from attaining leadership roles in the Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP in Malawi. This Synod, as stated in the previous section, is comprised of almost 70% women. Out of the four groups (men, women, youth and children) which meet every Sunday, the women do not only come on Sundays for the service as many of the men do. Women usually come on Saturdays to clean the church in preparation for the service the following day. Then on Sunday, they tend to come to church early in the morning before everyone to teach Sunday school. Thereafter, they will also in most cases be the first ones to come to the service while most men and young people come late after the liturgy. With this picture in mind, of how actively women are involved in the life of the church one might make a mistake of assuming that these women are holding leadership positions in the Church. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Infact, it is only in this area of leadership where women are still lagging behind. Although

¹³She is not a Malawian but I have quoted her because she gives a general picture of how women leaders operate, and therefore gives a good picture of how Malawian women, to be specific, women from the Nkhoma Synod, might serve God once given leadership roles.

men are few in numbers compared to women, they still like to be heard and seen; while women should be seen but not heard (Amoah, 1997:23). As of now it is only the Nkhoma Synod (out of the three CCAP Synods in Malawi) that does not have women in key leadership positions. For example, in Blantyre Synod, the deputy moderator of the whole Synod is a woman reverend. The lack of women in leadership positions means that in the Nkhoma Synod the practical theological aspects of liberation, salvation and praxis are not considered to be a priority. As a result, the church has never seriously looked into the welfare of women, nor tried to find out their concerns, so that they could come up with liberative and salvific ways. This constitutes the main research problem of the study. From the discussion above, three major elements seem to have contributed to this problem, namely historical, cultural and biblical factors. I will now discuss these in further detail.

1.3.3. Background factors contributing to the problem

2.3.1.3. Historical factors

The first contributing factor may be regarded as a historical one. As indicated earlier, when Christianity first came to Africa, it came as a male dominated religion. The first missionaries who came to the Nkhoma Synod in 1889 were from the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), Cape Town, South Africa. Phiri (1997:43) says these missionaries imposed their own oppression on women by maintaining a patriarchal theology, which pushed women away from leadership positions.

Phiri (1997:43) continues to say that in the DRC, at that time (1889), women were not allowed to be evangelists, deacons and elders. The situation continued until 1982 when women deacons were first accepted; and in 1990, when the door for elders was opened. Phiri (2000:23) says the coming of the early missionaries and the colonial government did not create a favourable environment for the revival of a female led cult. The missionaries refused to even recognize that in an African context, it was often the women who took on leadership roles in religious matters. This also affected the education of African girls who were not allowed to go beyond standard three.

Phiri (1997:53) further says, “The type of education given to girls was to prepare them for home management”. One man is quoted by Phiri (2000:109-110) saying: “In fact when the missionaries came they showed it very clearly to us that women should not

hold positions of leadership. Therefore, the Synod is only following that example.” I will now turn to cultural factors as a second contributing element to my problem statement.

2.3.1.4.Cultural factors

Some of the ministers, church elders and deacons assume that the issue regarding women in leadership is a cultural problem. Merriam Webster’s Dictionary (2014, paragraph 1) defines culture as the beliefs, customs, arts, etc of a particular society, group, place or time; is a way of thinking, behaving or working that exists in a place or organization. According to the Chewa cultural context of the Nkhoma Synod, a woman is a source of evil. This belief started when women lost their dignity after the matrilineal culture was coerced into patriarchy (cf. 1.3.1 above). This is especially seen during gatherings (political meetings, chiefs meetings, meal times, funeral times, etc.) where women and girls sit separately from men and boys.

In this regard, the Chewa culture seems to be similar to the Choson culture of Korea of which Kim (1998:45) writes, “The traditional belief that governed the relationship between the sexes was founded on the principle that men and women should be separated physically as well as emotionally and that women must be subservient to men in their lives.”

Ponce (1993:140), a reverend ordained by the Presbyterian church of Guatemala; and who also served as a professor at the Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary, the Mariano Galvex University in Gautemela; and at the Seminario Evangelico Unido de Teologia (SEUT) in Madrid, calls this belief “the sexist myth”. He says this myth asserts that a woman is by nature seductive, resulting in the belief that women should not be in contact with men because they might lead them to sin due to their beauty and seductive nature. Ponce’s description befits the Chewa culture because his view is similar to how women are considered in this culture. Since the mind-set of most reverends, church elders and deacons belonging to the Chewa culture has not been converted to Christianity, they still carry this Chewa culture with them to the church.

The danger is that instead of leading the church according to God’s Word, they lead it according to their culture. For example, out of one hundred and forty four congregations of the Nkhoma Synod only two of them, which is located in the city of

Lilongwe, has a seating arrangement in the church that allows couples or people of the opposite sex to sit together. The remaining one hundred and forty two still adheres to the Chewa culture where women sit separately from men.

The reason behind this separation is that women are a source of evil and so church leaders do not want them (women) to disturb men when the Word of God is preached. Phiri (2000:110) quotes one man who said, “A woman from one synod ... started working at the synod’s office and twice got involved in relationships with married ministers working with her.” These kinds of stories have brought constant fear in the Nkhoma Synod that the presence of women in leadership position will be a constant temptation to men. It is believed that many men would lose their faith because of women.

Due to women being viewed as a source of sexual danger to men, they are exempted from being ministers and church elders, etc., because in their pastoral functions they would be in constant contact with men who are not members of their immediate family. Another man said that it would not be culturally accepted for a married woman church elder to accompany a male minister; or a female minister with a married man church elder in the same vehicle when going on visitations or meetings (Phiri, 2000:113). The Synod meeting of April 1999 used this point of travelling to meetings with women to reject them (women) from taking up positions of leadership in the church (Phiri, 2000:114).

As the Nkhoma Synod is busy excluding women from leadership roles, the Anglican people of Hong Kong, Canada, USA and New Zealand chose to be different from the rest by breaking the norms of their tradition of hindering women from priestly ministry. In 1977, they started to ordain women as priests after discovering that the theological reasons given against women had no fundamental objections. In terms of the Anglican tradition, they discovered that in no way could they be static forever¹⁴ (Montefiore, 1978:73-75).

¹⁴ This is just an example of other denominations that at first were also strict on women leadership but later on resolved to change their decision and started engaging them.

Some men have argued on the basis that women ‘gossip’. Ponce (1993:140) highlights how some men have discredited women leadership based on the argument that women gossip. She says, “There are religious people who emphasize her necessity to maintain severe discretion in pastoral secrets, and they argue that a woman pastor would not be able to maintain such a silence.” The Chewa culture has also seen women as a second-class citizen, who is fragile, and the weaker sex who easily lose their tempers (Kapuma, 2001:39). This type of stereotyping has also been followed by the church to such an extent, that they think the church should be directed by someone with sufficient energy.

Phiri (2000:111) quotes one man who said, “Women lose their temper quickly, church leadership positions require patience. Women do not have patience.”

The roles of women have also contributed to their rejection as leaders. Men say that women cannot be leaders because if they are married they are under the responsibility of their husbands and the culture does not allow women to rule over men. Kim (1998:20, 36) speaking from a Korean background, which in most cases seems to be quite similar to the Chewa culture says, “Women were seen as the property of their husbands without the rights to demand the loyalty and faithfulness of their husbands. Culture decides on the nature of work men and women should do, so much that girls grow up knowing that their place is in a home, giving birth and rear children.”

Phiri (1997:113) gives an example which men use to discredit women from taking leadership positions. She says that as “weaker vessels” they cannot become a reverend, because then they will have two jobs: that of taking care of their home; as well as that of taking care of one or two congregations with several outstations. This will be too much work for her especially when she becomes pregnant. Worse still, pregnancy has been associated with uncleanness. Phiri (2000:117) comments, “The fact that God created women with the ability to bear children is looked at by some men of Nkhoma synod as a curse which can prevent the spirit of God from being present in the church if they were to be ordained ministers”. Commenting on the same issue of pregnancy, Oduyoye & Kanyoro (1992:211) admits that the usual long period of pregnancy is further seen as a possible impediment and distraction for women priests.

It was some of these cultural problems that led the International Missionary Council held in Le Zoute, in Belgium, in 1926, to feel that there was a need to study the cultures of people converted to Christianity in order to differentiate between what is evil; what is not compatible with Christianity; and what could be of value in such culture. Culture is of crucial importance in any society and is supposed to play a dynamic and constructive role in it. Oak (2008:1) argues that culture is important because it ties the people of a community together and shapes the principles of the individual's life, thinking and influence his/her mindset. He continues to say that culture gives an individual a unique identity but also shapes the personality of a community in terms of language, its staple food, its customs, traditions and festivities. Corroborating it further, Bate (2002:23) says that culture carries with it the experience of identity which gives a person the characteristics of – for example – being called a Malawian, a Christian, and etcetera.

The question that still stands is this: Since one of the aims of the Nkhoma Synod during the time of the missionaries was to free women from dehumanizing cultural practices (Phiri, 1997:43), is depriving women from leadership positions one way of freeing them; or is it just another form of dehumanizing them?

No wonder Summer (2003:25) encourages women not to give up but to keep moving forward, just like Esther¹⁵ who went forward despite violating the norms of her culture because she knew God called her to do so. Moloney also says, “In Christ all culturally and historically conditioned prejudices are broken down” (1981:30).

In this section, I tried briefly and tentatively to indicate how historical and cultural factors have contributed to the absence of women in leadership roles in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Historically, the first missionaries excluded women from leadership positions because Christianity was presented as a male dominated religion. Culturally, it was observed that women are considered to be the source of evil and as such they

¹⁵ Esther 4:15-16 was a Jewish lady who went forward and approached the king even when she was not summoned to do so. She asked the king to spare her people, the Jews from the destruction and slaughter planned by Haman (Esther 7: 1-10).

are obliged to sit separately from men in many forums. After considering these two factors, I now move on to the third factor, that of Bible interpretation.

2.3.1.5.Factors related to the interpretation of the Bible

According to Phiri (1997:50), the debate concerning women in leadership roles in the Nkhoma Synod began in September 1966. The question was raised at a Synod meeting on whether women should be allowed to go to theological college and whether women should be ordained?

A year later, the representative of the Synod who served on the Theological College Board, gave a report to the Synod stating that the Board agreed that female students may be admitted, but only in instances where the sending synod had some special work for them to do, such as women's work but not with the view to ordination (S.238 of 1965)¹⁶ This is exactly what W.A. Criswell, a Baptist minister, who also held a negative view of women ordination said when Bill Moyers (1987:9-10) asked if women were to be ordained. He answered: "No sir, they should not be ordained." The minutes of the Synodical Committee meeting in 1972 and 1975, shows that the Synod's argument against women's ordination was biblically motivated (Minutes KS4066 of 2004)¹⁷. They quoted 1 Corinthians 14: 33-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 to justify their viewpoints. This is also what John Piper and Wayne Grudem (1991:15) said, "We are persuaded that the Bible teaches that only men should be pastors and elders ... so it is unbiblical, we believe, and therefore detrimental, for women to assume these roles". Schmidt Jr. (1996:14-16) asserts that this view against women ordination has led the vast majority of women to describe their denomination as hierarchical, male dominated and oppressive, while Becker (1996:30) sees it as a patriarchal expression of the male supremacy.

¹⁶ S 238 stands for the number of Synod minutes. Nkhoma Synod minutes are numbered continuously from the first Nkhoma Synod assembly to date. This specific minute is taken from the Nkhoma Synod assembly of 1965.

¹⁷ KS 4066 stands for the number of the minute of the Synod committee. Synodical committee minutes are numbered continuously from the first meeting to date. This specific minute is taken from the Synodical committee meeting of 2004.

Ponce (1993:137-138) asserts that the fundamentalists¹⁸ (whose interpretation of Scripture does not allow for the ordination of women) have described women as, “people holding a secondary status because they were formed after men, making their submission unconditional ... since they are inferior to men by divine mandate, therefore they (women) should not be ordained as pastors” (Ponce 1993:137-138). This contribution by Ponce is exactly the same as the one earlier raised by Kapuma (1.3.3.2), that women are considered to be second-class citizens.

The basis of the Synod’s biblical argument against women in leadership positions stems down to a hermeneutical problem. The question is about the way they interpret the Bible with respect to the role of women, and the particular lenses they use to interpret (context-specific) utterances regarding women in the Bible. For instance, perspectives such as that of Moloney’s (1981:28) are not necessarily taken into account, “What must stand at the heart of the Pauline discussion is his overarching theology of the Christian life as being a life in Christ which is found in Gal 3:27-28.”

After looking at the historical, cultural and biblical factors leading to the problem of the absence of women in leadership roles in the Nkhoma Synod, one outstanding aspect that is missing in all of them is the lack of emphasis on the issues of liberation, salvation and praxis in their belief systems. By maintaining the patriarchal theology, the missionaries were blindfolded to practically exercise liberation, salvation, and praxis. It is hard to consider and practice for example the issue of women liberation in a culture where they (women) are considered as the source of evil. With these historical, cultural and biblical factors (probably leading to the problem of the absence of women in leadership roles in the Nkhoma Synod) in mind, I now turn to the actual research question.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the light of this discussion, the basic research question of the dissertation can be stated as follows:

¹⁸ This is the group of people who completely deny women from holding any leadership roles, more especially ministerial posts. Their argument is based on the Bible; to them the Bible detests women from holding leadership roles.

To what extent are historical and cultural factors, particularly factors pertaining to the interpretation of the Bible, responsible for the lack of women in leadership positions in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod?

Related to this question, are two further sub-questions:

1. Complex as it may be to explore and measure the impact of these factors, would it be possible to substantiate and verify such influences empirically?
2. Once this has been done, would it for instance be possible to identify alternative readings of history, culture and the Bible?

1.5. THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research will therefore be:

- By way of a literary analysis, to do an in depth analysis of factors that in one way or the other contributed to, and still contribute to, the desperate position of women within the Chewa culture in general, and more specifically within structures of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.
- By way of empirical research, to do an analysis of the concrete reality of women in different faith communities in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.
- To explore the possibility of a new approach of reading and interpreting New Testament texts in addressing the problem regarding leadership in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.

The first purpose of the study will therefore be to probe deeper into the following three factors that contribute to the problem of the lack of women in leadership positions in the Synod.

1.5.1. Historical probe

In the first place, the researcher will endeavour to identify and analyse the historical reasons for obscuring women from holding leadership positions in the church. The documents and books from the history of the churches belonging to the CCAP Nkhoma Synod will provide important clues to some of the underlying historical aspects of the lack of women in leadership.

1.5.2. Cultural probe

A second probe is to look at the cultural factors contributing to the problem by examining the status and the impact of women in the broader society. Church members are people who come from a particular culture. In the African context, Christianity originated from somewhere else. In the Nkhoma Synod, Christianity was first brought by DRC missionaries who did away with some of the cultural practices (Phiri, 1997:43-44). The study and assessment of the culture in which the Synod is situated is of great importance in an attempt to understand its view on women.

1.5.3. A probe into the reading of the New Testament

The third probe is to look at the way in which the Bible was (and in many ways is still) interpreted to support the way in which women were/are kept out of positions of leadership in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. The main objective here is to do a thorough interpretation on 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 which are the passages which the churches mostly use to justify the position of women.

It is therefore of crucial importance to find out what Paul was trying to communicate to his original audience and what it may mean to us today. With the findings from the Pauline letters and the current cultural changes, the researcher would like to make them known to the Synod for it to come up with its own decision.

This section focussed on the nature and purpose of the research. It is now imperative to describe the hypothesis of this dissertation, which will be discussed in the following section.

1.6. HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis of this research can be described in the following way: If we do have a better understanding of the historical, cultural and biblical factors that influence the perception of women in leadership positions and put into consideration the Practical Theological aspects of liberation, salvation and praxis in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, the context may be more conducive for a change in attitude and practice to take place. This reminds me of Bosch's challenge, "The Christian faith must be reformulated and lived anew in each culture" (1991:542). The Nkhoma synod is from all three angles (biblical, cultural and historical) ripe for a radical change towards a positive view on

the status of women, and to welcome them in leadership positions as ministers, church elders, and deacons; and in any decision-making forum. This is what practical theology is all about; it is about liberating people of both sexes to worship and serve God freely. This will be explained in more detail in 1.7. on practical-theological perspectives, on women and their leadership roles. For now, however, the methodology will be described in the section below.

1.7. METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the historical, cultural and Biblical factors pertaining to the issue of the role of women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod; as well as the empirical reality of their situation and the way New Testament texts are to keep women from positions of leadership, the researcher will make use of the following strategies of inquiry:

1.7.1. Literature study

A critical analysis of relevant literature will be carried out. Books, for example of the New Testament which talks about women (i.e. the Pauline letters); as well as books on the Chewa and other relevant African books, minutes, journals, articles or pamphlets on early African missionaries will be read.

1.7.2. Empirical research

The researcher will use twenty-five focus group discussions, from twenty-five congregations of the Nkhoma Synod, in an effort to properly investigate the leadership roles of women. During these discussions, the researcher will pose the questions indicated in the questionnaire (see Annexure 1) to each of the participants. In order to evaluate the lack of women in leadership positions in this Synod, the researcher will conduct a qualitative empirical research study among: (1) Members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*; (2) Church elders; and (3) Reverends.

1.7.3. Exegetical research

The researcher will also undertake an exegetical study on passages from the New Testament in order to develop an approach of interpretation that may help the Synod of the CCAP towards a re-interpretation of the texts that have been misused and are still abused to keep women from positions of leadership. The following section is on

Osmer's research design, which is going to be used to address the different tasks of practical theology in this study.

1.7.4. The different tasks of Practical Theology

The researcher will make use of Osmer's (2008:4) research design as a basic framework for the logic of the project. According to Osmer, four core tasks need to be considered whenever conducting any research in the field of practical theology. These four tasks are as follows:

2.3.1.6.1.7.4.1. The Descriptive Task

This first task of practical theological interpretation asks the question, "What is going on?" Osmer (2008:4-6) asserts that the aim of this empirical task is to gather information that will help the researcher to discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations or contexts, through informal information gathering; careful listening; and looking more closely at patterns and relationships that are taken for granted. Without this process, we will not be in a position of interpreting fully what is actually going on. After identifying *what* is going on, the next step is to find out *why* this is going on. This is the work of the interpretive task, which will be explored next.

2.3.1.7.1.7.4.2. The Interpretive Task

This second task asks the question, "Why is this going on?" The author says that at this stage, the researcher needs to step back and make sense of what she/he has found. There is a need to ask, "Why did this incident take place? What sort of theories might help me better understand and explain the patterns and dynamics I have begun to discuss? Osmer (2008:6) explains these to be the key questions of the interpretive task of practical theological interpretation. Further, this task requires what the author refers to as "sagely wisdom," which is gained through years of experience and not just through the reading of books. After diagnosing what and why this is going on, it is then right to go further and find out *what ought to be going on*. This is done through the "normative task," which will be discussed next.

2.3.1.8.1.7.4.3. The Normative Task

This task asks the question, "What ought to be going on?" Osmer (2008:4) explains that this task helps the researcher to use theological concepts to interpret particular

episodes, situations or contexts; and construct ethical norms to guide their responses and learning from “good practice”. Without this normative task, we will remain spiritually blind to our situation and fail to solve the problem.

It is senseless to discover *what* is going on, *why* is it going on, and *what* ought to be going on, without finally coming up with a means of responding or implementing the findings. For this to be done the pragmatic task is called for. This will be discussed in the coming section, which will shed more light on what the pragmatic task can achieve.

2.3.1.9.1.7.4.4. The Pragmatic Task

This final task asks the question, “How might we respond?” According to Osmer (2008:4), this task determines strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are more desirable; and entering into a reflective conversation.

After looking at the tasks of practical theology as indicated above, I now move on to Ackermann’s approach to practical theology, with regards to the issue of women and their leadership roles.

1.8. SOME PRACTICAL-THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN AND THEIR LEADERSHIP ROLES

At this point I want to discuss the three concepts that Denise Ackermann (1966, 1985, 1988, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 2014) uses in delineating her approach to practical theology, namely: liberation, salvation and theory/praxis. The researcher is working from the assumption that for the women of the Nkhoma Synod to be fully engaged in church leadership positions, there is a necessity to put the above three aspects into practice.

Let me start by saying that I, in following Denise Ackermann, understand Practical Theology to be about the liberation of women, underprivileged, oppressed and the marginalized. As indicated earlier on, three core aspects will be discussed. This will be done with the three concepts of Denise Ackermann in the back of my mind.¹⁹

¹⁹ Denise Ackermann is a South African female theologian who was encouraged many years ago by the theology of liberation; and has since then fought for the recognition of women’s ordination because she believes there are some women who are called to serve the church in this way. She has lectured in the Department of Religious Studies and Practical Theology in the following institutions: University of

Ackermann (1996:33) asserts that theology is concerned with human suffering and emancipation, and should therefore promote the full humanity of all who suffer and who are oppressed, including women. It is only when practical theology is involved in the socio-cultural and political fields that it will make a real contribution to Christian praxis. This is because in the context of a broader more encompassing societal theory practical theology will be able to demonstrate the liberating power of the Christian faith convincingly (Ackermann, 1985:36). This means that the church of God at large, and the Nkhoma Synod in particular, is called to eradicate the cultural beliefs and systems which oppress and victimize women by side-lining them (women) from attaining their dignity as full human beings, created in the image of God. This problem of culture was discussed in 1.3.2.2., where the cultural beliefs and systems that have denied women leadership roles were dealt with. Ackermann (1998:17) points out liberation as one aspect of practical theology. This is explored further below.

1.8.1. Liberation

Ackermann (1998:17) asserts that the point of departure for liberation theology is the acceptance of all humans as being of equal worth in a just society. As such, she believes that critical theologies of liberation begin with systemic analyses that take the experiences of women and marginalised people into account so that after constructive exploration, transformation should take place (Ackermann, 1997:65). She therefore defines liberation as the concern for all people to become full participants in human society (Ackermann, 2014:4). It is for this reason (that critical theologies of liberation begin with systemic analyses) that in my methodology I indicate that I will engage with twenty five focus groups, so as to obtain sufficient information to represent the entire Synod; unlike focussing on only one or two focus groups, which will not be an accurate representation.

In a different yet comparable context, Ackermann (1985:36) identifies with Gutierrez (1973:307) who defines liberation theology as an attempt to reflect on the experience and meaning of the faith, based on the commitment to abolish injustices and to build

South Africa, University of Cape Town, University of Western Cape and Stellenbosch University. She is also the author of several articles on this subject, i.e. Liberation and Practical Theology; Feminist Liberation Theology; Engaging Freedom; a voice was heard in Ramah; after the locusts, etc.

a new society. It is along these lines that Ackermann sees the liberating dimension of practical theology as embodied in the paradigm of Jesus, the truth that sets us free (1985:32). Liberation is therefore considered as a core concept at the very heart of the Christian gospel (Ackermann, 1985:36), which is seen as containing within it the need for human liberation which will be manifested in a new human divine relationship in a new just order (Ackermann, 1988:16).

Liberation theology, according to Ackermann (1988:17-18) does not speak of male oppressors and female oppressed, that is, of all men over and against all women; but about patriarchy as a pyramidal system and hierarchical structures of society and church in which women's oppression is specified not only in terms of race and class but also in terms of marital status. She therefore calls for a paradigm shift in our approach to theology whereby "the pyramid of domination" in our theology and church life will be shifted to one of partnership where women can no longer be the "outsiders" or "the other" but must share with men as participants in a common journey to discover the meaning of life and ministry in Christ. Njoroge & Reamonn (1994:30) confirms this by saying, "A call for partnership is a call for participation and community building where mutual love, justice and respect for all life are the building blocks." In partnership, says Kapuma (2001:5) "All the gifts given by God are affirmed that no one is seen as being superior to the other; everyone is equal."

In conclusion, Ackermann (1996:34) says that one way of reclaiming Christianity's original emancipatory impetus is by focusing on liberation theology and on actions of justice, for this becomes a tool for the healing of our society. She therefore affirms that the church which does not fully utilize the gifts of all its members (both women and men) is impoverished and as such invites practical theology to give more attention to theories which derive from a more open ecclesiology in which hierarchical oppressive structures and discriminatory practices are identified as unworthy of the church of Jesus (Ackermann, 1985:41). This means that the Word of God has a very vital role of liberating and setting free those who are being oppressed and victimized like women and the underprivileged. The Word of God has a role of nullifying all the injustices that are being practised under the blanket of patriarchy or culture. It is therefore critical for the church of God and the Nkhoma Synod in particular, to scrutinize their systems of Bible interpretation because as indicated in 1.3.3.3., poor

Bible interpretation and the Word of God has been used to side-line women from leadership roles. The Word of God is meant to be liberative and salvific; and not oppressive.

Just as it is hard to talk about healing from any disease without first talking about the medication provided, so it is hard to tackle the issue of women in leadership roles in the Nkhoma Synod and ignore the aspect of liberation. The need for liberation means that someone is somehow bound, either by systems or discriminative practices. As far as the Nkhoma Synod is concerned, women need to be liberated from what Ackermann (1985:41) calls, “hierarchical oppressive structures and discriminatory practices” which have left them (women) sidelined from leadership roles. Up till now, women have been discriminated from becoming reverends.

Since liberation is at the very heart of the Christian gospel, bearing in mind that Jesus came to set the captives free (Luke 4:18); it is therefore vital that women in the Nkhoma Synod should be set free (that is, liberated) from being treated as second class citizens; as well as from stereotyping, sexism and dependency syndrome. This is the dangerous side of culture. Millet (2014:1) says, “Stereotyping is a risky, offensive and non-productive exercise; it is the foundation of many cross-cultural conflicts”.

After having some idea of what liberation theology is all about and how it relates to the topic of women and their leadership roles, it is wise to also put into consideration the second aspect which Ackermann tackles, namely, “salvation”.

1.8.2. Salvation

According to Marais (2014:13),²⁰ salvation has interesting connections with the notions of well-being and health with the vision for ‘abundant life for all’. Theology is therefore encouraged to promote the full humanity of all who suffer and who are oppressed, including women. Secondly, Marais (2014:11) says that salvation has to do with both freedom and grace; freedom because it transforms or frees human beings and human society from sin and guilt. She has described salvation as a “doing theology,” in that it involves fighting against any form of oppression. On the other

²⁰ See also Ackermann, 2014:1

hand, salvation has to do also with the unending grace of God, which enables us to respond to Him in Christ.

In Ackermann's thought, grace is practical in that it performs salvation; it sanctions the forgiveness of sin, it restores relationships and enables love and hope. Salvation therefore has to do with performing and transforming grace, which culminates in the vision of flourishing of all human beings and the entire creation (Marais, 2014:12).

This transformative aspect of grace aims at the attainment of full personhood for both women and men; and recognises the potential and abilities of every human, as well as pays less attention to specific gender roles, qualities and commissions. It therefore identifies with Paul's vision in Galatians 3:27-28 where he states, "There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Ackermann, 1988:22-23).

Salvation is in a certain sense the foundation of every Christian. The issues of oppression and discrimination are as a result of the unsaved hearts, since the person who has been saved is a freed person who thereafter fights against any form of oppression. This means that the issues of subordination, discrimination and oppression of women in the Nkhoma Synod can be effectively solved if the issue of salvation is taken seriously. This is a vital step because it will provide through the grace of God the forgiveness of sins; the restoration of sour/poor relationships; genuine love between women and the leadership of the church will be manifested; and there will be hope for the abundant life where both women and men will have the essence of being "fully alive". As transformed people, they will recognize the potential and abilities of women in the church; therefore women leadership will no longer be an issue of contention and debate. Instead, men will take part in breaking down all patterns of domination in the church and society. We now move on to the final aspect which Ackermann emphasises, namely, that of the theory/praxis relationship.

1.8.3. Theory/praxis relationship

Ackermann (1985:31) starts by saying that practical theology, as an operational science, contains both theory and praxis derived from the Scriptures and the praxis of the community in an interaction of the theological and the empirical of the Word and

reality. With regard to theory, she says it is derived from faith in Jesus Christ and applied to the concrete contemporary situation of the church.

As for praxis, Ackermann (2014:4-6) describes it in three ways, concurrently. Firstly, she says the theology of praxis is a theological operational communicative science in which reflection on the theory is central. By this is meant that theology links knowledge with action and passion for those who are suffering and oppressed. Praxis has a communicative dimension in that it plays both a formative and performative role in shaping Christian doctrine and Christian believers which results in Christian communicative actions of faith; it is faith in action.

Secondly, Ackermann (2014:5) says the theology of praxis involves reflection and critical engagement. By this, praxis is referred to as the intentional practical engagement whereby people sought to do something for the common good (Ackermann, 1996:41) after reflecting critically on the communicative praxis of women, marginalised and oppressed people (Ackermann, 2014:5). Ackermann (1998:37) concurs with Russell's (1974:53) definition of praxis that it is the action that is concurrent with reflection or analysis and leads to new questions, actions and reflections, not with the idea of searching for one overarching system but for new ways of action which can bring about change.

Ackermann (2014:5) concludes this second point by affirming that Christian doctrine that engages in the task of critical engagement is the one eligible of transforming and performing the ethical and strategic dimension of a Christian communicative praxis in which ethical is concerned with justice and equity within religious, political, social and economic structures and relationships, while strategic dimension is concerned with liberation (Ackermann, 1996:41).

Finally, Ackermann (2014:5) defines theology of praxis as experiential theology, oriented towards particular issues, which are rooted in experience. Experience plays both formative and transformative roles in shaping Christian believers and Christian doctrine, in that telling experiences and stories of women, marginalized and oppressed people helps to break the silence which hinders the lives of these people. This process on its own brings healing because hearing and engaging in an informed reflection with

the life stories of those who have been oppressed has the potential to change the lives of the privileged hearers (Ackermann, 1996:44, 48).

Ackermann concludes the discussion on praxis by referring it to the ministry of Jesus Christ. She refers to Jesus' ministry because she acknowledges that His ministry was not just sermons and teachings (theory); it was also praxis of healing, caring and of being with those who were marginalized (2014:13). This is what she also advocates.

The issues of theory/praxis are part of the church's life. The church, which ignores these two elements, does not understand the complexity of the way in which communities of faith operate. As far as the Nkhoma Synod is concerned, this is one of the biggest challenges, namely, 'linking of knowledge (theory) with action and passion (praxis).' Due to the hierarchical structures and discriminative practices passed on to the Synod by the first missionaries, it is hard to engage in the actions of passion which brings about change.

Regarding women in leadership roles, this calls for the Synod to have a critical reflection and analysis which will enable it (the Synod) to come up with new ways of action that will empower women to take up leadership roles without any resistance or stumbling block. The Synod needs to open itself up to listening to the life experiences and stories of women, in so far as leadership roles are concerned. Such an exercise will bring healing to the inwardly wounded women; and at the same time help the Synod to hear their deeper feelings and groaning (of the women).

Ackermann has used the three vital aspects of practical theology namely salvation, liberation and theory/praxis in the development of her own approach to practical theology. These are the same aspects that were pointed out in the problem statement (1.3.2) and in the hypothesis (1.5). In the problem statement it was indicated that the absence of these three aspects (liberation, salvation and praxis) in the preachings of the Nkhoma Synod might contribute to the sidelining of women in leadership roles. In the hypothesis, it was hypothesized that considering these three aspects might bring about a change of attitude towards women leadership. I stand in agreement with her that these three aspects are very vital as I embark on the issue of women leadership in the Nkhoma Synod. They provide helpful lenses that I can use in my own research in trying to come to a deeper understanding of the problematic situation that many

women in my church find themselves in, especially when aspiring for positions of leadership. The following section is on the value that this research holds.

1.9. VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

Hopefully, this research will be of great benefit not only to women but also to the pastors, church elders, deacons and the laity (the church and the society) since they will know their current stand on the position of women in the Church. They will also understand that it is not culturally, biblically and historically wrong for women to take up the leadership positions in the church, especially when their contexts are changing with the passing of time. The researcher strongly believes that this study will aid in bringing about the necessary change in people's mindset towards women. After looking at the value of the research, it is important to explain how this research will be used in the Synod of Nkhoma. This will be expounded in the dissemination, which is discussed in the following section.

1.10. DISSEMINATION

Once completed, the first copy of the research findings of this study will be given to the General Secretary of the Nkhoma Synod, who on behalf of the researcher will present it to the *moderamen* (Executive committee of the Nkhoma Synod) for approval to be used in the Synod. Upon approval by this committee, more copies will be produced.

Some of these copies will be given to the congregations so that it can be used during *chilangizo* cha atsikana (girl's Christian initiation); some will also be given to the presbyteries to be used during the women's annual presbytery conferences; and another copy will be donated to the Josophat Mwale Theological Institute, to be used by the Faculty. The following section will be on planning, which will provide a brief outline of what is going to be tackled throughout the dissertation.

1.11. OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter one serves as an introductory chapter that will introduce the research topic, as well as the motivation, purpose, methodology, research problem, and hypothesis of this study; including the value and contribution this research seeks to make.

The second chapter will cover the history of the Nkhoma Synod; and its stand on the position of women in the church. It will also deal with the women organization, which is commonly known as “*Chigwirizano cha amai*.”

The third chapter is on culture; and has to do with Social Identity Theory, which is in line with the title of this dissertation, which is mainly addressing the leadership of women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Social Identity Theory explains very well how this leadership is affected. Chapter four will deal with the way the Nkhoma Synod, and other parts of the world, have interpreted 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

Chapter five will focus on the empirical part of this research; which will be done as a qualitative study through interviews with three different focus groups within the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, so as to obtain a picture of what is really going on concerning the reality of the lack of women in leadership positions.

In chapter six, the historical background, as well as the literary and the theological-rhetorical aspects of the Pauline letters will be analyzed, especially the letters to the Corinthians and Timothy.

Chapter seven will present the new model, which has been developed in this study as the suggested approach to the current dilemma which the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is facing, with regards to women in leadership roles.

Chapter eight is a concluding chapter that summarizes all the issues discussed in the previous chapters of this dissertation.

After looking at the introduction, motivation, purpose, hypothesis, methodology, research problem, and the value of the research, I now turn to chapter two where a comprehensive report on the history of women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORY AND ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CCAP NKHOMA SYNOD

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explain how the ways²¹ of the early DRC missionaries who proclaimed the Word of God, has affected the interpretation of the roles of women in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). I will also introduce the main organization of women in the Nkhoma Synod, known as '*Chigwirizano cha amai*'. Thereafter, the basic characteristics of this organization will be described, i.e. its structure, aim, duties, meaning, training, secret, impact and challenges. In this chapter I will be dealing with the descriptive task of Osmer (2008:4, 31-78) which asks, "What is going on?" In this case I will be exploring what is going on in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod with regard to the arrival of the first missionaries and the formation of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

Women in all circles of life form a great percentage of the population, not only in society and the church, but also throughout the whole continent of Africa, as well as worldwide. The National Statics office of Malawi in 2008 showed that the population of Malawi was 13.1 million, of which 6.4 million were men; and 6.7 million were women. This is even true in the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod. As indicated in chapter one, women form the majority members of the church; but it is with sadness to say that they are also the most neglected group in the church when it comes to leadership roles. Kanyoro (2002:24) confirms this by saying, "The church will need to come to grips with the fact that 80 per cent of church membership in Africa is made of women, and that not even five per cent of church leadership is women!"

It is with regret to say that up to this day the Synod is still fighting and debating on whether it is right to ordain women as reverends, church elders and deacons, or not. It was during the Synodical meeting of 2007 that women were allowed to start preaching in the church. Since 2009, they were allowed to be ordained as deacons and church elders only. Up till now, there have been no woman reverends; and it is a taboo to approach this topic, as the issue of ordaining women as church elders remains a hot

²¹ How these missionaries presented the Word of God and their leadership style.

debate and a point of contention. Some men have stepped down from their leadership roles simply because in their particular congregation women have been elected as church elders. Before 2007, women were not allowed to preach in places where men formed part of the congregation.

A request was once made from the presbytery to the Synod to allow women to preach at the funeral of their fellow women guild member; or during Wednesday (mid-week) prayers in which most instances the appointed preacher (who was a male) did not turn up. The answer from the Synod was, “No, it is impossible and not appropriate for a woman to preach at a funeral or during mid-week service”. (The Nkhoma Synod, 2006:122).

As indicated in chapter one, the history of the church shows that the early missionaries from the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) contributed to the current situation in which women were not fully welcomed to take up leadership roles. Hence, what follows is a well-detailed historical background of these missionaries.

The Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa is considered to be the founding mother of the Nkhoma Synod. Pauw (1980:65) in his thesis²² says, “On Thursday morning, 28 November 1889 they (Rev Andrew Murray and Rev Vlok) pitched their tent near Msongandeu, Chiwere’s village, at the edge of the Msungudzi stream under a large wild fig tree. This date is taken as the foundation day of the DRCM in Malawi.” Before this time, Kalilombe says, “The early Livingstonia Missionaries who came from Scotland (Presbyterian church) had established a mission post in 1875 at Cape Maclear, not far from Mua which they handed it over in 1894 to the Dutch Reformed Church whose bases were at Mvera in the north, Livulezi in the south and Malembo some few miles from Mua and Mtakataka.”

By just looking at how the church is run and by hearing some comments from the old people, one can see the marks the early missionaries left on the church in the Nkhoma Synod. Phiri (1997:43) says, “When Christianity came to Africa, it came as a male dominated religion. Anything that was incompatible with this perspective was

²² This was Martin Pauw and the title of his thesis was “Mission and Church in Malawi”.

crushed. When the Dutch Reformed Church Mission came to Central Malawi, women were excluded from being evangelists, deacons and elders.”

As indicated earlier on in chapter one, the Dutch Reformed Church came to Malawi in 1889 (Longwe, 2007:72). The first missionary to come to Malawi was Andrew C. Murray. Pauw (1980:60) narrates his story as follows:

It took him nearly two months to complete the journey from Cape Town. He stopped in Blantyre, waiting to meet Dr Robert Laws and decide about an area where the DRC could work. He was accommodated by Rev and Mrs Scott²³ who informed him that his (Rev Scot) aim was to civilize the native in a Christian way by exercising influence on marriages, social, moral and political life.

Pauw (1980:60) referred in his thesis to Murray’s comment on his emphasis of seeking to elevate the people in a general sense rather than seeking specifically to win them as members of Christ’s church. Pauw differed entirely from the previous viewpoint:

We are not sent out; I think to civilize peoples, but to convert them. Not to give them a high secular education, but to teach them to keep all things which our Lord and Master has commanded. Let those who will be our helpers as evangelists ... learn what is necessary for their work ... Let us impress the word of God upon them in all possible ways, and furthermore teach them to read the Bible for themselves in their own language.

So before actually settling at Mvera, Murray first settled at a place called Kararamuka, in Karonga among the Ngonde, where the Livingstonia Mission was willing to let the DRC start a Mission.

Unfortunately, on 12th November 1888, he became severely ill of sunstroke and lay in a coma for several days. His companions did not expect him to pull through and had already selected a site for his grave, but he miraculously survived (Pauw, 1980:61). He left that place and on the 8th of July 1889, Rev T.C.B Vlok²⁴ joined him at Bandawe where together they walked on foot to Chiwere’s headquarters.

²³ Dr Robert Laws, Rev and Mrs Scott were all Presbyterian missionaries who came from Scotland. They accommodated Andrew Murray mainly because he was their fellow missionary who had also come to witness the name of Jesus. The fact that he was a stranger in Malawi, he needed some information and guidance as to where he could settle and establish his mission. It was during this time that Rev Scott was able to share his vision and ministry in Malawi.

²⁴ Rev T.C.B Vlok was also a missionary who came from the Dutch Reformed Church, in South Africa, Cape Town.

On the 28th of November 1889, as indicated at the beginning of this chapter, they (Andrew Murray and Vlock) pitched their tent near Msongandeu, Chiwere village. Phiri (1997:44) says Chiwere welcomed Murray not because he was interested in Christianity but because he wanted protection from other chiefs and from the advancing colonial government. On the same issue, Pauw (1980:66) adds that they (Murray and Vlok) later learnt that Chiwere had not really wanted them there, but had feared the unlimited magical power they were thought to possess.

By inviting them he merely wished to protect himself. Whilst among the people of the Chiwere Village, Murray was accused of two cases: He was first accused of causing his God to hold back the rains until the house he was erecting was finished. He was given one day to pray to his God for the rains to come. Knowing the consequence, Murray and Vlok prayed earnestly that night and the next day. In the evening, it rained in abundance (Pauw, 1980:66). In a second incident, he was later accused of witchcraft (*mfiti*) by the sub-chief, Mtereni. When the sub-chief failed to testify publicly, the matter was dropped. Peace between chief Chiwere and Murray together with Vlok was restored by exchanging a blanket for a goat (Pauw (1980:66).

They chose to call the first mission *Mvera* (to obey) than *Chetsa* or *Kaso* (other names which were also suggested) because this said Pauw (1980:65) is where people would come to hear and obey the call to arms drummed out to his warriors from Chiwere's headquarters.

The name also signified how obedient the clay is in the potter's hand. Their early message was mainly classified into three categories and this is how Pauw (1980:68) summarized it:

These aspects, the emphasis on the need to know and recognize personal sin through knowing the Law, the importance of Christian giving and of personal witnessing, are significant as they reflect aspects which were constantly emphasized and which are to this day reflected in the life and work of the church which grew out of the DRC Mission.

This message stopped many people from coming. When these missionaries saw that the attendance at the services had dropped, they introduced a rule which stated that all employees (of the missionaries) and all who came for medicine or for selling their products had to attend morning prayers. This helped because many were able to hear the Word of God and gradually responded to the message (Pauw, 1980:67).

During the short stay with the Livingstonia and Blantyre Missions,²⁵ Murray was able to differentiate between the two. He noted the latter as being more spiritual in nature; and also as paying more attention to children and schools, than the former.

Both of these impressions, writes Pauw (1980:63),

reflected what the DRC also regard as priorities: a spiritual emphasis, with the aim of drawing people to be converted to Christ; and concentrating on a system of station and village schools, whereby many young people, even older ones were reached by the teacher-evangelists.

True to his vision, Murray started schools such that during the first five years, the mission opened five more schools. The first one started in 1890 at Mvera where the best four male students were sent to Livingstonia Mission for further education (Phiri, 1997:44).

Pauw (1980:68) says, at first the schoolwork grew slowly due to fear and suspicion by many that the children might be captured and sold into slavery if they were sent to school. Weller and Linden (1984:104) says, education was also affected by the masked *Nyau* dancer. They wrote:

The *Nyau* retaliated by recruiting younger boys and forbidding them to go to school. The response of the Catholic priests and the DRC ministers was to ask the government to ban masked dancing at night. Out of one hundred and forty six schools in Chewa areas, eighty had lost pupils and the schools near Likuni were actually closing as attendance fell to nothing.

The number started growing when they discovered that their fears were baseless. The first boarding facilities to be built were for the boys who were twenty in total by November 1890 (Pauw, 1980:68). The girls' boarding school started later in 1895 after the arrival of Miss Martha Murray, a sister of A.C. Murray (Phiri, 1997:44).

Besides education, A.C. Murray also began a small medical practice. It is recorded that between May and August 1890, he treated 200 patients (Pauw, 1980:69). The mission work started expanding with the coming of more workers from South Africa.

²⁵ Livingstonia and Blantyre missions are Presbyterian missions, which were established by the missionaries from the Church of Scotland.

Phiri (1997:44) gives the names of these missionaries: Rev Robert Blake, who came in 1892 and started Kongwe Station; Rev William Murray came in 1894 and took over Livulezi Station from Livingstonia in 1895. He became head of the DRCM until 1936; Mr A. van der Westhuizen who laid the foundation for the Mission's agricultural teaching and Miss Martha Murray, the first lady worker. Pauw (1980:71) says that by 1899, the small band of missionaries totalled fourteen but with three missionary graves in Malawi, those of Mrs Vlok at Livulezi (1895); Rev du Toit at Nkhoma (1897); and J.S. Cridland, at Kongwe (1898).

Apart from focusing on schools and medical work, these missionaries also concentrated on teaching catechumen classes. It was in 1892, when three men registered as catechumens; and three years later, the first two were baptized. Their names were Moses Kamadia and Paulos Maondze. In 1897, a group of nineteen converts, thirteen men and six women were baptized by A.C. Murray.

Among the women, Sarai Msumwa (15 years) was the youngest; who later on became better known as Sara Lingodzi Nabanda. She was later trained and served in the Mission for many years as a midwife (Pauw, 1980:60-70).

Phiri (1997:45) comments on Sarah Nabanda, that she was the first woman in the Nkhoma Synod to work at the Nkhoma Hospital; and in appreciation of her special contribution, the Mission named a girls' nurses home at Nkhoma Mission after her, which she officially opened on 8th December 1961.

Little by little, the mission work grew from *Mvera* (1889) to Kongwe (1892), Livulezi (1894) and Nkhoma (1896). At Nkhoma, the Mission was accepted by the Chewa chief, Mazengera. Pauw (1980:74) says that the chief was desirous to have a Mission near him more for political and protective reasons than any other. This area was continuously attacked by the Ngoni and Yao raids. From Nkhoma, other Missions were opened in Mlanda in 1902; Mphunzi in 1903; Malingunde in 1907; Malembo in 1907; Chinthembwe in 1910; and Mchinji in 1914.

The work of the missionaries in the Nkhoma Synod was what Pauw (1980:86) called a 'comprehensive approach,' in that they were not only targeting the spiritual dimension part of a person, but the physical as well. This is how he summarized their work:

The work of the DRCM in Malawi had reached great heights. An intensive medical, educational, industrial and agricultural program was developing and the printing press was in full production with amongst others a magazine in Chichewa appearing regularly where in 1905 there were five mission stations, 152 village schools with 16,125 pupils and 683 teachers, the figure had by the end of 1914 risen to 669 schools supervised from nine mission stations with 43,292 pupils enrolled, being taught by 1,715 teachers. There was a total communicant membership of 5,071 with 8,370 catechumen people.

2.2. THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH MISSION

With the above comprehensive report, one may conclude that there were no women missionaries from the DRC because there is not one recorded to have become a reverend; or taken any leadership role in the church. From the start, it took almost three years after the male missionaries had come from the DRCM to send a woman missionary. Unfortunately, it is not fully explained why there was such a vast difference in the gap, apart from what Phiri (1997:48) says, that it reflected what was happening to women in the homeland of the DRC, South Africa. Morkel (2014:3), a South African white lady, is in agreement with these comments made by Isabel Phiri. Morkel (2014:3) said:

Despite its (church) male dominance, I had no doubt that God had gifted me for, and was calling me into, full time ordained ministry in the DRC. Rude was my awakening when I had to face the fact in my last year (1975) that only men were ordained in the DRC! I vividly remember a conversation with a career counsellor where I just sat and cried about the disempowered position I found myself in.

Phiri (1997:49) writes that the image held by the missionaries; and their understanding of the place of women in the church in the 19th century, was based on a specific interpretation of Genesis and the letters of the Apostle Paul. Hence, the subordination of women was thought to be divinely sanctioned. As a result, when the DRCM came to Central Malawi, women were excluded from being reverends, evangelists, deacons, and elders (Phiri, 1997:43).

The first female missionary was Martha Murray, the sister of Rev A.C. Murray, who came in 1892. The second female worker came in 1895 (Pauw, 1980:70). Even after having these two women in their midst, none of them were chosen to be in the Mission Council, which was formed on the 25th of October, 1898. Instead, it only comprised the ordained ministers of the Mission. It later included the male missionaries. The

female missionaries were excluded (Phiri, 1997:48). Pauw (1980:81) agrees that it was indeed only the ordained ministers who at first occupied even the General Mission Committee. Only at a later stage, were medical doctors incorporated, as well as teachers with a certain minimum qualification, senior lay workers; and two ladies elected by the women members of the staff.

Another way of how women were excluded from leadership roles is explained as follows by Pauw (1980:69). In 1897, nineteen people got converted and were baptized, out of which thirteen were men and only six were women. The outstanding Christian men were given the opportunity to serve for many years as evangelists and lay preachers, but none of the women were given such roles. They were given other roles, for example, social work. Sarah Nabanda was for instance given a midwifery role, which she served for many years.

None of the missionaries' wives took any leadership roles. They were reduced to teaching girls and women how to read and write, home craft and social work, because missionaries believed that an indigenous church depended on the Christian families. The establishment of Christian families depended on mission work with women and young girls (Phiri, 1997:47). Let us now see how missionaries viewed the education of women and girls.

Phiri (1997:48) says that missionaries provided women and girls with just enough education to be good wives and not to be economically independent. She continues to say that the reason behind *chilangizo* (the Christian initiation for girls) was nothing else but an aspect of the same policy of establishing Christian families.

The rules and regulations as to who may attend the school for girls tell a story of how girls have been perceived. Phiri (1997:47) says,

The education of girls in the DRCM was worse than that of boys in that apart from learning how to read the Bible, only a few lucky girls went to missions' girls' hostel. In order for one to qualify to be admitted at the hostels, one had to be at least twelve years old and should have the permission of one's parents. This meant that girls who wanted education, but had parents against it, had no chance of going to school. It is interesting to note that boys were not expected to get permission from their parents or guardians.

So far I have talked about when the DRCM came to Malawi and their mission work. I have also explained the place of women in the DRCM. I now move on to the Women's Guild in the Nkhoma Synod.

2.4. WOMEN'S GUILD

2.4.1. Background

The Women's Guild is locally known as *Chigwirizano cha amai*. Phiri (1997:71) has defined it as an organization of Christian women who are united in their service for the Lord. She says the idea of women uniting in the service of the Lord is based on Exodus 35:25. In this passage, the children of Israel were making a tent for the Lord, and the women got together and used their skills to serve the Lord. *Chigwirizano cha amai* is a very strong organization within the church of the Nkhoma Synod. It was in 1939, when the Synod thought of establishing it, but it was only in 1940 when it was finally established.

It was actually the women missionaries who suggested to the Synod the formation of *Chigwirizano cha amai* (Phiri, 1997:74.) As a pilot project, it only started in five congregations with a membership of 100 people.

The five congregations were: Kongwe, Nkhoma, Dzenza, Malingunde and Mchinji (Zolamulira, 2006a:1). The membership increased from 100 to 19,000 in 1998; and the Women's Guild meeting centers had grown to 220 (Zolamulira, 2006a:2). This briefly summarizes the background of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*; I now go on to discuss its structure.

2.4.2. Structure

The only exceptional organization in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod that has the same structure as that of the Synod itself is the *Chigwirizano cha amai*. It is well organized and smoothly run. It is characterized by the following:

2.4.2.1. Central Executive Committee

From the synodical point of view, this Committee is officially called "Moderamen." According to Phiri (1997:75), the first Executive committee was elected in 1941 and consisted of the following office bearers: The Chairlady, whose main duty was to chair the meetings during the executive meetings and the women's synodical meetings,

which takes place once every three years; Vice Chairlady, who served on behalf of the chairlady whenever she (the chairlady) was absent. There was also the Secretary and Vice Secretary, whose main duty was to record the minutes during the executive and synodical meetings.

In addition, there was also the Treasurer and the Vice Treasurer, who were responsible for collecting and keeping the money of the whole *Chigwirizano cha amai*. They were also responsible for keeping the money records and transactions.

They were obliged to present the records to the Synod and the entire *Chigwirizano cha amai* during the central meetings. The final position is called *mlowam'malo*²⁶ (a member) whose main duty was to stand-by. She acts on the behalf of any of the above positions, if any of them is sick or absent for various reasons.

All of the above positions, except that of the treasurer and his/her vice, were and are still taken by pastor's wives. The selection of these leaders was and is still based on whether persons have the talent of leadership and whether they could read and write in Chichewa (Phiri, 1997:75). The point discussed after structure, is the presbytery committee.

2.4.2.2. The Presbytery Committee

This Committee acts at presbytery level. A presbytery is a section within the Synod, which in most cases has congregations numbering from five to nine. According to Phiri (1997:75) this too consisted of pastor's wives and leaders of that presbytery. Their role was to organize revival meetings of *Chigwirizano* once a year, but there is a slight change in this committee nowadays. It is mainly comprised of three women: Two are minister's wives; and the third one is just a member of *Chigwirizano cha amai*. The first one, who is a minister's wife, is called "*Woyendera Chigwirizano*"²⁷

²⁶ Mlowam'malo is more like a general fitter who fits any position in the executive committee. For example, when the secretary and her vice are not present, then this mlowam'malo will act on their behalf and do their secretarial work.

²⁷ Woyendera Chigwirizano in other forums is called the travelling secretary because her main task is to visit all the congregations in designated area, supervising the work of Chigwirizano cha amai and provide trainings.

(The one who visits the branches of *Chigwirizano*); the second one, is a member who is chosen from the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

These two (minister's wife and a member) are responsible for training the members of the Women's Guild the rules and regulations of *Chigwirizano* at every congregation in the presbytery; and to make sure that these rules are followed. They are also responsible for reporting to the Executive committee of the Women's Guild in any area, which is ready to become the branch of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, so that women can start gathering there for the bi-monthly meetings. The last person in this committee is called "*Mlowam'malo*" (a stand-by). This one too is a reverend's wife. She comes in only when *woyendera Chigwirizano* is dead, sick or busy with other activities. I will now proceed to discuss the third committee.

2.4.2.3. The Congregational Committee

This is a committee of *Chigwirizano cha amai* which is formed at a congregational level. Every congregation in the Nkhoma Synod has this committee. Their positions and their roles are similar to those of the central executive committee. The only difference is at the congregational level, in that all the leadership positions here goes to members of the Women's Guild²⁸. The minister's wife takes an advisory role (Phiri, 1997:75). She is more of an overseer of the whole *Chigwirizano cha amai* at her congregation. This committee takes us to the final one under the structure of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, that of the Sub-Congregational Committee.

2.4.2.4. The Sub-Congregational Committee

Phiri (1997:75) calls this committee, 'a branch committee.' This committee runs the same way as the congregational committee and it has the same structure. It reports to the congregational committee and the minister's wife remains the advisor. The sub-congregational committee is formed or born from the prayer houses, which are very far from the main station (where the reverend is located).

²⁸ In the executive and presbytery committee's the leadership positions are headed by minister's wives; but in the congregational committee, for instance, the position of chairlady and secretary are all headed by members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

It is formed in order to reduce the distance that women have to travel from the prayer house to the main station twice a month. They only go to the main station once a year, usually at the end of the year, to give their reports. It is also a time of fellowship where women in all substations come together to share the Word of God and to eat together. After looking at the structure, it is also important to consider explaining the aim of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*, and thereafter its duties.

2.4.3. The aim of the *Chigwirizano cha Amai*

The aim of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* is to encourage Christian women, who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, to become true witnesses of Jesus Christ (Malongosoledwe a *Chigwirizano*, 2000:1)

2.4.4. The duties of the *Chigwirizano cha Amai*

Malongosoledwe a *Chigwirizano* (2000:2-3) have the following as the duties of the *Chigwirizano*:

1. To make sure that Christianity begins in her (a member of *Chigwirizano*'s) home.
2. To follow-up on those who have backslidden.
3. To visit the sick and encourage those who are depressed and mourning.
4. To teach her children the Word of God and send them to Sunday school.
5. To take care of her family by cleaning the house, as well as wash her children and husband's clothes.
6. To make sure to go to church every Sunday.
7. To give the offering to the church and the monthly pledges to *Chigwirizano*.
8. To avoid traditional practices which are against God's Word.

Longwe (2007:72) in her book quotes Mrs Stedman, a missionary, saying:

There are many things in these ceremonies in conflict with the demands of Christianity... Experiences shows us that the Africans regards these traditional rites as something possessing very great power, and even now with civilization coming to them at such a rapid pace, we find it difficult to let them realize that there is no actual power in these tribal rites.

As I proceed to describe what *Chigwirizano cha amai* is all about, it is also important to look at how members of this organization perceive it. This I do in the next section.

2.4.5. The meaning of *Chigwirizano* to the Women

Phiri (1997:74) says the birth of *Chigwirizano cha amai* in the Nkhoma Synod was looked upon by African women as a sign that the women had reached a stage of maturity in their Christian faith to work in a more organized manner and on a larger scale. This is seen in several ways, such as:

2.4.5.1. Membership

One's personal willingness to become a member of this organization is a clear indication of maturity. Neither a pastor, nor his wife, is to persuade a woman to become a member. The only exception is when her husband is chosen as a deacon or an elder. In this case, the woman is asked to join *Chigwirizano cha amai*;²⁹ otherwise women wilfully come in their large numbers.

At almost every gathering of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, the secretaries register new comers; and several others are also confirmed to become accepted members after going through lessons for three months.

2.4.5.2. Attendance

I will start with their bi-monthly meetings. Twice a month, women travel long distances on foot going to *Chigwirizano cha amai* and they do this joyfully without someone forcing them. Here the Word of God is preached and the audience is given the opportunity to comment on the message. They also pray for several prayer items. After the service or on an agreed day, they also go visit the sick and comfort the bereaved (*Malongosoledwe a Chigwirizano cha amai*, 2000:2).

Women are also given an opportunity to attend the annual conference. This is a big conference attended by thousands of women. Every year women look forward to

²⁹ This decision was made for two reasons: 1. The fact that the husband is a leader means that he will in one way or the other be in a position to advise the Women's Guild members. So the leadership of the church deemed it awkward for a church elder to be advising women while his own wife is not among the women who are being advised. 2. According to the regulations of *Chigwirizano*, when a church elder dies, at his funeral, all members of *Chigwirizano* are required to put on the attire/uniform of *Chigwirizano*. They are also the ones who are allowed to be in the room and surround the dead body; but the rest in civilian clothes either stay in separate rooms or outside. According to our culture, the wife is supposed to be next to, or close to the body of the husband. If she is not a member of *Chigwirizano*, it means she will be in the other room. So to avoid such a scenario, they decided that once a man becomes a church elder, then the woman should become a member of the women's guild.

attending this conference where four or five congregations come together with the purpose of spiritual and emotional nourishment. This is a very joyful moment of the women's guild for they share testimonies, pray, eat, chat and dance together as the children of God. It is a conference lasting three to four days. Within this time, the women put aside their family or any other problem and concentrate on the Word of God. They don't have to worry about what to eat or drink, nor where to sleep, as everything is provided for them. They are only asked to bring beddings, plates, cups and spoons, not forgetting the Bible, exercise books to make notes in, and pens.

Phiri and Nadar (2006:73-74) quote Esther Chombo who said,

The yearly meeting, (annual conference) is a great event for the women because it provides them with an opportunity to meet and to share different views and experiences pertaining to their role in the church and society at large. The aim of the annual conference is for the spiritual renewal and empowerment for the women.

2.4.5.3. Financial contribution

Chigwirizano cha amai is the richest organization in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Through their monthly and annual contributions, the *Chigwirizano cha amai* has managed to achieve many great things, ranging from the synodical to sub-congregational level.

No wonder Gnanadason and Kanyoro (1996:58) refer to women in general, saying, "Women are the backbone of agricultural production ... women work harder than anybody else." Women sacrificially give towards the work of God and these contributions are in three categories:

Zamafuta: (This is the money which symbolizes the oil which maintains the flame of the lamp). Phiri (1997:83) says the first proposal of the *Chigwirizano* to the Synod include the giving of a financial contribution of 3 pence from every member to her branch. This started in 1940 (Phiri, 1992:168); and 1 pence from the 3 pence from each member was to be sent to the central fund,

which was introduced in 1941. In 1997, each member was giving K1.00³⁰ (Phiri, 1997:84) but now the contribution is K550 per person.

Zachifundo: (This refers to the compassionate fund). Phiri (1997:84) affirms that it was in 1978 that it was decided that the money from this funding should be contributed separately from *zama futa*. It is used to help the sick, bereaved, and the needy; and it still serves the same purpose up to date.

Zachitukuko: (This refers to the development fund). It started in 1988 with the purpose of developing the Synod, congregation and society at large. Women were asked to pay 20 tambala per month extra, to go towards the development fund. This money was then used says Phiri (1997:84) to lifting the status of women. The priority then was the education of women. Hence, they contributed towards the building of Malingunde Women's Training Centre, which was opened in January 1992. Nowadays, each member is asked to contribute any amount freely towards this funding. The money is used, for example, to construct houses which are used both for renting and housing staff members of the Synod, to buy a 4x4 Prado, as well as a twenty six seater minibus, maize mill, etc.

Chigwirizano cha amai is the best forum for women because it is where they share their joys, sorrows, ideas for development; and truths for spiritual growth. They also share their belongings. It is similar to what happened in Acts 2:42-47, where the early disciples continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers ... praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Phiri (1992:147-148) says that before the establishment of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, women had a feeling that God's work could only be done by men.

³⁰ By then this was equivalent to one US dollar.

She quotes a letter from Linda Naphiri from Mchinji, which appeared in *Mthenga*³¹ of March – April 1940, which says:

Thank you presbytery for allowing *Chigwirizano cha amai* to start. We already see the advantages of having *Chigwirizano* such as revival meetings among women, knowing one another as we discuss the Word of God and have fellowship, raising transport money for the women who are going to introduce *Chigwirizano* to other villages. What I like most is that women too have got a chance to help others even though we ourselves are not well off. I am strengthened by John 9:4 where Jesus said that ‘we must do God’s work while it is still day for night is coming when no one can work.’ Now that we have been sent to do God’s work, even though we are women, we can do it. We have realized in a new way that women are not useless. We are friends of the Lord of lords; we have found special respect in Christianity ----. We rejoice upon hearing that presbytery has accepted women to start *Chigwirizano*. Acts 2:17 says, “In the last days God says I will pour out my spirit on all the people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy ... “Who are daughters?” Are we not the ones?

Based on the above quotation, Gondwe (2009:18) comments that it gives the impression that before the introduction of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, the women had no chance to share the Word of God, even among fellow women. So women see *Chigwirizano cha amai* as a forum to express themselves, and as a step forward in the enhancement of their status.

They called themselves, friends of the Lord of the Lords, daughters who will prophesy along with the sons and those that have been sent to do God’s work. For women, says Gondwe (2009:18), the introduction of *Chigwirizano cha amai* marked the beginning of a new era.

To conclude on the meaning of *Chigwirizano*, Phiri says (1997:74), through *Chigwirizano*, women saw themselves as co-workers with the Lord Jesus. Knowledge brought them to the realization that Christianity was offering them a special kind of respect. It brought them the confidence that as women they could do God’s work.

³¹ Literally, *Mthenga* means messenger but in this case it was a newsletter comprised of different messages or activities which have taken place from various congregations of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.

It also made women start looking at the Scripture's in a new light; and seeing themselves among those who are sent by God ... understanding themselves in a new way, thereby empowering themselves with the Word of God.

This section was on how women perceive the *Chigwirizano cha amai*. The next section focuses on the training itself, which all women who wants to become members of the organization need to undergo.

2.4.6. The training of *Chigwirizano cha Amai*

2.4.6.1. The prerequisite

According to Phiri (1997:77) when *Chigwirizano* was introduced, it was made clear that only those women who are baptized and partake in Holy Communion could become members. This was because they only wanted women who were mature in their faith and serious in serving Jesus Christ. Since it involves sharing one's faith with others and encouraging weak Christians, it became important that members should first understand their own commitment to God. In 1942, the Central Executive Committee decided on the guidelines for membership.

If one wanted to become a member, she was supposed to inform the leader of *Chigwirizano cha amai* who invited her to attend *Chigwirizano cha amai* meetings for a month as an observer; during this time her behaviour and attendance were scrutinized. Thereafter, she was asked to give a contribution of 3 pence of *zamafula* and to buy a white headgear, which was used to identify *Chigwirizano cha amai* members.

Rules of membership changed in 1978. Phiri says (1997:77) it became necessary for anyone who wanted to become a member of the *Chigwirizano* to get a letter from her church elder to confirm her Christian stand and her monthly church pledge. The period of observation was further extended to three months, which meant attending six meetings of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*. She was further required to memorize the rules and regulations of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*, which are written on her membership card. In the seventh week, she was asked to recite what was on the card during a meeting. The rules haven't changed since 1978. This training is commonly known as '*kalasi la Chigwirizano*' (*Malongosoledwe a Chigwirizano*, 2000:12). They require a confirmation letter from a church elder in order to avoid enrolling women

who are not members of the church; or enrolling members of the church who are not committed/active Christians. They are referred to the church elder unlike the minister because it is him (the church elder) who knows all the Christians in his designated area and their involvement in the church's activities. Therefore, the church elder has to inform the leader of the *Chigwirizano* of anyone who has been excommunicated from or disciplined by the church, because one automatically ceases from being a member of the Women's Guild if they have been excommunicated from the church.

The truth behind this is that one cannot be a member of *Chigwirizano cha amai* when in the first place, she is not a Christian; and secondly, one cannot remain a committed member of the Women's Guild when she is not an active member of the church. This is scrutinized through one's church attendance, giving of the monthly offering and one's involvement in church activities.

During the time of training (of these new members), they have their own sitting place separate from the long-standing members. The separation comes in mainly because of the dressing code. No one dressing differently is allowed to sit amongst the members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* when they are in their uniform attire. The only time one is transferred from the locally dressed section is on her induction day after going through the training, and having successfully recited what was on the membership card. She is then dressed in the uniform of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

The wearing of the white headgear is only done by the minister's wife. In her absence, the leader of the *Chigwirizano* does the work. The whole uniform is comprised of: a white long sleeve blouse, white headgear, white belt, black skirt and black shoes. The black part of the uniform symbolizes the old life of a person before accepting Jesus Christ; while the white part signifies being a new creature in Jesus Christ, whose sins have been forgiven.

The induction day is a very special day not only for the one being inducted, but also for the family members and friends; and also the *whole Chigwirizano cha amai*. Women dance and sing songs of praise. Nowadays even some family members and friends who are not members of *Chigwirizano* come to be part of this joyful and blessed ceremony. I remember at Kaning'a CCAP one husband came to testify the

inducting service of his wife. He was there with his video camera to make the ceremony more memorable

As indicated earlier on that originally the *Chigwirizano* was only for elderly women, but Phiri (1997:78) says that from the very beginning the Central Executive saw the need for making a special effort to include girls and young mothers as well. A special request was made asking the women missionaries to start *Chigwirizano* among the girls.

The request was granted and there are now several young women who are members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*. The request was granted based on two grounds: The first one, Phiri (1997:78) says, is because most of them were once members of the Student Christian Organization of Malawi (SCOM)³² when they were in secondary school. Therefore, by the time they joined the *Chigwirizano* they were already mature in their Christian life. The second is because their husbands were elected as church elders. Phiri (1997:78) comments:

... has led to a ruling which says that all the wives of deacons, church elders and ministers should become members of *Chigwirizano*. The reasoning behind this was that people look up to the wives of church leaders as role models in *Chigwirizano*. They therefore feel discouraged when wives of church leaders do not become members.

Once one has become a member of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*, the challenge now becomes how to maintain that membership, as the rule is not “once a member, always a member”. The coming section is on how to maintain one’s membership.

2.4.6.2. The maintenance

The main challenge of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* is how to maintain one’s membership. It is different from the stand of salvation, which says, “Once saved always saved”. Hence, there is no need for you to do anything in order to maintain your salvation, “for by grace we are all saved, lest man boast” (Ephesians 2:8). This

³² SCOM is a Christian organization, which was formed with the purpose of reaching out the Gospel to the young people in secondary schools. Its goal is to make sure that young people become Born Again (BA) and zealous for the Lord. Most of its members are from Protestant churches because the Roman Catholics (RC) and Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) also have their own organization.

is not the case with the *Chigwirizano cha amai*; one has to do the following to maintain her membership:

- **Register every year**

The rule in *Chigwirizano* is that when you become a member you are then asked to renew your membership every year. Every year, from January to June, women are asked to re-register their names by paying the agreed amount of money, which is locally known as ‘*zamafula*’. If you don’t pay after June it means you automatically de-register yourself from being a member³³ (*Malongosoledwe a Chigwirizano*, 2000:18).

- **Attend the bi-monthly meetings**

Phiri (1997:79) records that in the early days members used to meet on Wednesday mornings once a month to teach each other the Word of God and other important issues. Later on, the day was changed to Friday mornings because it coincided with Wednesday morning midweek church prayer services.

The number of these meetings has now increased to twice a month; the first and third Friday or Saturday of each month. Those in rural areas meet on Fridays; while those in urban areas meet on Saturdays. This is because some women go to work on Fridays. It is a must for every member of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* to attend all the meetings unless they are sick, very old or there is a funeral. According to *Malongosoledwe a Chigwirizano* (2000:19), the congregational committee (2.2.2.3.) is supposed to visit any weak member who has failed to attend the bi-monthly meetings for three consecutive gatherings. If the person continues to be absent from these gatherings for no justified reason, then according to the rules and regulations of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*, she is to be excommunicated from the committee..

³³ De-registration only takes place when there are no valid and justified reasons. It does not apply to those who are sick and old people.

- **Remain a faithful and committed Christian**

It was indicated in 2.2.6.1 that one automatically seizes from being a member of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* once excommunicated from the church. This calls for one to remain a faithful and committed Christian if she wants to continue as a member of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* (Malongosoledwe a *Chigwirizano cha amai*, 2000:20). There was an incident in a certain congregation where the church session (The Church Leaders Meeting) lodged a complaint to the congregational committee of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* that women only participated in the activities of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*; and not that of the church. In order to avoid such instances, the executive committee decided that permission for enrollment of members should first be sought from the church elder.

I have so far explained that membership is maintained by remaining a committed Christian at the church; and by observing all the rules and regulations of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*. I have also explained how membership can be lost, i.e. either by being excommunicated from the church; or by breaking some of the rules and regulations of the organization, e.g. failing to register at the beginning of every year or failing to attend bi-monthly meetings. The following section is on how a member is restored to the *Chigwirizano cha amai* after being suspended.

2.4.6.3. The restoration

For one to be restored as a member of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* after being withdrawn on the grounds of either failing to pay the annual registration fee; or due to being absent from the bi-monthly meetings (even after receiving a warning from the congregational committee). To remedy this, she needs to go through the same training she went through the first time. One has to go through the same process as explained in 2.2.6.1., (Malongosoledwe a *Chigwirizano*, 2000:13). This is to remind them of their commitment to the *Chigwirizano*, as this is what they learn in those three months before they are inducted. On the day of their induction they confess and promise before the whole gathering to abide by the rules and regulations of *Chigwirizano*.

For those who are excommunicated from *Chigwirizano*, due to being excommunicated from the church, the restoration procedure is different. They are restored to the *Chigwirizano* upon the virtue of being restored to church first. They don't have to go

through the same training they went through the first time. The following section is on how the *Chigwirizano cha amai* has managed to succeed, even in the midst of wrangles.

2.4.7. The secret of the *Chigwirizano Cha Amai*'s success

2.4.7.1. Unity

There is a saying in English which goes like this, "United we stand and divided we fall". In Chichewa it is stated as "*Mu umodzi muli mphamvu*," which literary means there is power/strength in unity. This is what has carried the *Chigwirizano cha amai* since 1940 when it started, up to the present day. The name itself, "*Chigwirizano cha amai*," has got a spiritual power and impact on the women for the Bible says, "What you speak is what you become" (Mark 11:23); thus, there is power in what you confess. Phiri (1997:71) comments on the same by saying:

Chigwirizano strongly believes that there is power in united efforts ... *Chigwirizano* recognizes that all women who are in Christ form one body. Each member has a different gift (Romans 12:4-8) and is commended to use whatever gift she has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms, (1 Peter 4:10).

As a united body, women in the *Chigwirizano* make sure to accomplish what they have agreed to do. With this spirit of togetherness and oneness, it has managed to achieve very big projects in the Synod.

This is exactly what Gnanadason and Kanyoro (1996:60) mean when they comment as follows, "What is more important is that women are increasingly working together in their various activities, developing a sense of solidarity and togetherness which will in the long run be a key factor in effecting change."

This does not mean that there are no misunderstandings, but that the *Chigwirizano* tries to encourage unity in diversity. This is summarized by Njoroge and Askola (1998:117) as follows:

The communal life-support structure remains attractive to women because of its power as a model of unity in diversity, mutuality and reciprocity, a joint effort to keep the living alive and the dead living. It makes yesterday, today and tomorrow into a whole in which we feel ourselves alive and well. When a woman considers how the model will fare if she drops her support in response to men's preference of self-

centered individualism. She stands petrified at the junction of self-denying love and personal authenticity.

Njoroge and Askola are trying to describe the power of a group in which women are willing to deny their “self” for the sake of others in the same group. This is a strong point, which has blended members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* together. This attitude of “groupness” helps women to major in their strength, and not their weaknesses or differences. This is related to what Social Identity Theory (SIT) tries to achieve. This SIT will be tackled in more depth in chapter three; but for now, the following section deals with the second point which has helped the organization to succeed.

2.4.7.2. Creativity

Another woman during a bi-monthly meeting in 2009 described a woman as someone who is very creative in many things. *Chigwirizano cha amai* has tried to come up with several activities of reaching out with the gospel; and of raising finances. Gnanadason and Kanyoro (1996:60) says, “Women save some money from their various activities and put it together. When there is a substantial sum, it is given to one of the members so she can meet a need which otherwise she would be unable to fill.” Just to concur with this, the *Chigwirizano cha amai* has some of the following activities that generate an income:

- **Producing *Nsaru Za Chigwirizano* (Women’s Guild material and wrappers)**

These materials are produced at the executive and at the congregational level. The executive committee has got its own material, which is annually produced with the purpose of raising money for the running of the whole *Chigwirizano cha amai*. The material is sold to all congregations of the Nkhoma Synod. The one that is produced at congregational level is mainly initiated by the Congregational committee of the *Chigwirizano*, especially where the presbytery annual conference is to take place. The money raised from this material is used to support the annual conference and it is mainly sold within the four or five congregations which gather at the same place for the conference. These materials are both popular and marketable.

Each and every woman is encouraged (not forced) to buy these wrappers because it is now a rule to dress in the church attire produced from these materials during the annual and main conferences. They came up with this decision as one way of eradicating competition among women with regards to dressing, during these conferences. They also want each woman to look uniform. The leader of the executive committee, Mrs Kamunga, said that in the past some women couldn't go to the annual conferences because they didn't have either new or good clothes to wear during the event. Some could even bother their husbands to buy them new clothes for the meeting. So in order to avoid such foreseeable circumstances the executive committee decided to introduce these church materials.

Each day of the conference has its own church attire. For example: On the arrival day (Thursday) they put on their congregational material; On the second day (Friday) they put on *nsaru ya cholinga* (the wrapper which has all the duties of *Chigwirizano cha amai* printed on it); On the third day (Saturday) they put on *nsaru ya muni* (the material which has the symbol of a lamp on it); Finally, in the morning (Sunday) of the fourth day women dress in *nsaru ya green* (it is green in color with the pictures of Women Guilds).

Through this business of selling the wrapper material, the *Chigwirizano cha amai* has managed to buy a 26-seater mini-bus, a 4x4 Prado, as well as build houses and maize mills. The executive committee of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* in 2010 also advised the general secretary of the Nkhoma Synod, Reverend Dr. Chifungo, to produce and sell a Synod material (wrapper) so that they could buy their own car. During this time the Synod didn't have their own vehicle, so they used to borrow the 4x4 belonging to the *Chigwirizano*. Since the Synod didn't have money to purchase the material, *Chigwirizano cha amai* lent them money. After selling the material, the Synod managed to buy a very strong, executive Prado from the profits. The third way women prove their creativeness in raising or generating funds is through mock weddings. This is discussed next.

- **Mock weddings**

This is the activity in which the *Chigwirizano cha amai* utilizes the wedding anniversaries of church members or reverends to raise funds. Everything is organized

as if it were for a newly married couple. They start with the officiating ceremony at the church; and finish with the reception where the *pelekanipelekani* (financial contribution) is made. What differentiates the mock wedding from an official one is where the accumulated money goes. As for the real one, money goes to the wedded couple; while as for the mock wedding all the accumulated money goes to the organizers who in this case are *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

A good example of such a mock wedding is that which took place on 10th July 2010, which involved the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod, Reverend Dr. Chifungo, and his wife. The leading couple was at that time the Vice President of Malawi, Honorable Joyce Banda and her husband.³⁴ The whole activity was organized by the *Chikuluti Chigwirizano cha amai* choir with the purpose of raising money to be donated to the Josophat Mwale Theological Institute which was at this time going through financial crisis.

- **Choir festivals**

This is a very old fashioned way of fund raising. Different, well-known choirs and artists are called to one place. Then people are asked to pay a fee upon entering the hall. Nowadays, a person is asked to pay a minimum of K500.

These are just some of the few fund raising activities which women use to show their creativity. Let us go to the impact of *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

2.4.8. The impact of *Chigwirizano Cha Amai*

Chigwirizano cha amai has a very large impact and continues to impact not only its members but also non-members. The impact has been divided into the following categories:

³⁴ She was the residing president during the writing of this dissertation. Unfortunately she lost the position after the presidential elections which took place on 20th May, 2014. So she is no longer the president of Malawi.

2.4.8.1. Spiritual impact

Phiri's research which was done in 1997 showed that *Chigwirizano cha amai* was number one among all the church's sections that are involved in increasing church membership and building the quality of church members. She continues to say that this was as a result of its primary role, which is evangelism (Phiri, 1997:107). The spiritual life of most women is very high. Several factors have contributed to this growth. Some of them are:

- **The Bi-monthly meetings and annual conferences**

During these gatherings, says Phiri (1997:80), they find a chance to preach, share testimonies of the things that God is doing for them, pray and sing freely. Most of all, continues Phiri, there is solidarity in purpose which helps the women to renew their commitment to each other and to God.

So these two weapons: the Word of God and prayer have really gained roots in the lives of many Women Guild members. This has resulted in having very strong women of God who no longer rely on witch doctors for any help. They know the Word of God and they apply it in their own daily lives.

- **Revival meetings and door to door witnessing**

Phiri (1997:80) says the door-to-door witnessing program started in the 1940's when members used to go into the villages. Each group went with their women missionaries who carried small packets of salt to give to the women they witnessed to. They used John 3:16 as the passage for their preaching. In 1942, there was a book on sale on how to witness and each member of *Chigwirizano cha amai* was encouraged to buy a copy. This type of witnessing has greatly boosted the spiritual level of many women in that before they go to witness they first had to read and know the passage very well. They first have to be spiritually nourished before they can nourish other people; and they had to spend much time praying for the whole programme. As a result, their level of understanding God's Word has deepened. To agree with Phiri, Kawale (2001:213) says, "Apart from sharing testimonies in their monthly and annual meetings, women go from door to door evangelizing the people in their neighborhood where they speak to both men and women." In terms of revival meetings, Phiri (1997:80-81) says,

“Originally they were organized by *Chigwirizano* women at presbytery level who invited a number of reverends to preach. It is only in the late eighties that the Synod gave permission to women to organize revival meetings and choose speakers among themselves.” It has now become part of *Chigwirizano*’s program of almost every congregation to hold these revival meetings once a year.

To concur with Phiri, this program is no longer controlled by the church. They solicit their own funds; invite their own preachers; and they themselves come up with the theme of their meeting. The church steps in only when they have a short fall in the area of money. During this time, women with special needs, i.e. family problems, unemployment, sickness, etc., are prayed for.

There have been vivid testimonies from several women on how God has healed or changed their families. A good example is what happened last year in one of Lumbadzi’s prayer houses. Although it was a women’s revival meeting, men were also welcomed.

One man came to be prayed for due to his son’s mysterious death. He went to the witch doctor who gave him *juju* (African medicine) to put on the tomb of his son at night. He was told that the one who killed his son will also die. He followed the instructions but to his surprise the man whom they thought killed the boy didn’t die. A great enmity developed between these two families. After listening to the message of forgiveness and reconciliation preached at this revival meeting, the man came forward literally crying, asking for God’s forgiveness. He was prayed for and was also advised to reconcile with his enemy. This man came early in the morning rejoicing that he had forgiven his long time enemy; and had even reconciled with this person. The expression on his face showed that he was now a free person. In 2010, another lady of Chiwe CCAP also testified on how her prayer life was changed after attending a prayer session during the revival meeting. She wrote a text message which reads: “I am very thankful to God for directing you to teach on prayer. I write to let you know that I am no longer the same, I everyday wake up 5 am praying”.

Praise God! These are just a few testimonies that testify to the impact of *Chigwirizano cha amai* on people’s lives - men and women, boys and girls. Kawale (2001:213) comments by saying:

The church in Nkhoma Synod is growing and remains very strong because the women in their evangelistic outreach have helped many Christians to keep their faith. In other words, women have assisted to maintain the socio-religious transformation of the people in the Synod. This is what Ackerman is encouraging in chapter one (1.8.1) that the church has to realize fully the gifts of all its members both women and men otherwise it (the church) is impoverished. This is because many women have helped their husbands to accept Christ as their Lord. These Christian women have also been instrumental and influential in teaching their own children the word of God.

Since a human being is not only spiritual but also physical, let us now see how *Chigwirizano cha amai* has physically impacted the church and society.

2.4.8.2. Physical impact

Chigwirizano cha amai is holistic or comprehensive in its approach, in that it sees and deals with human being as a whole: spirit, soul and body. It considers one's body and soul as crucial for one's spiritual life; for without a soul and body a person ceases to be a human being. As such, *Chigwirizano cha amai* deems it important to deal with the person as a whole. Hence, it considers the issue of women empowerment as very important. The Executive committee of *Chigwirizano* invites government officials to teach on topics like business administration, gender, HIV and AIDS, etc. Through these teachings women are encouraged to start small-scale income-generating businesses. For example, in 2009 during the main conference which took place at Chongoni, the wives of the pastors were advised to form small groups of 8-10 people. The intention of these groups was to solicit funds and be able to start small businesses in order to reduce the dependence syndrome on their husbands. Gnanadason and Kanyoro (1996:57) quotes Rush Besha, in the book titled, 'Women, Violence and Non Violent Change,' who wrote: "The dependence of women on their husbands or fathers was seen as the basis of their lowly position in society, so that if only women could be helped to be economically independent, most if not all of their problems would be over. There was a consistent call for women to involve themselves in income-generating projects." Women, not only in Nkhoma Synod but also world wide are susceptible to the oppressive behaviours of men because they are solely dependent on them (men) for their survival. They are therefore abused in various ways because men know there is no way out for these women, unless they become financially empowered. Women empowerment is therefore a vital topic for members of

Chigwirizano since the entire responsibility of child development rests on them. She has to independently (in the case where the husband is dead or impotent) think of what to dress and feed her children, as well as how to educate them.

Most of the men spend their time in the markets playing *bawo*³⁵. The women have no choice but to stay at home and suffer together with the children just like a hen sits on her eggs no matter how much the wind blows and the rain falls on her. So this is how crucial women empowerment is to *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

There is a saying in Chichewa which goes like this: “*Ukaphunzitsa mwana wa mkazi waphunzitsa mtundu wonse.*” It literally means, when you teach a girl child you have taught the whole clan. This connotation explains the responsibility a woman carries from the very beginning while still a girl; and the impact she has on the whole society/clan once she is educated. Besides women empowerment, women are also exposed to issues on HIV and AIDS; these have also been of great importance to women. During the annual conferences of Kapita CCAP in 2005, where four congregations met; and in 2006 at Chimwala CCAP, where six congregations converged, this topic was taught. An official from the Evangelical Association of Malawi, Mr Charles Gwengwe, was the spokesperson who taught on both occasions. His approach was from an academic, as well as spiritual perspective. “I have a very different positive understanding of what HIV & AIDS is all about,” testified one lady after the lesson. Sessions on this topic helped many women in several areas, for example, testing if they were HIV negative or positive; or how to help someone who is infected or affected by the virus; and also how to protect themselves from contracting the virus.

Cleanliness (health) is another vital topic amongst women, especially from the rural congregations. Most women in rural areas tend to relax when it comes to caring for their own bodies and that of their children once they are married. They no longer take care of themselves the way they used to when they were teenagers. It becomes worse when they have children for the workload increases. They have to go to the garden,

³⁵ This is a very common local game played by most men especially in rural areas. During summer men spend most of their time at this place. They can spend almost the whole day playing. They go home late in the evening expecting the wife to provide food, which she struggled to find.

fetch firewood and water, cook, etc. By the end of the day they find themselves tired and exhausted with no strength to bath.

They go to bed with a very bad odour, repelling their husbands instead of attracting them. So it has been the role of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, especially during the annual conferences, to emphasize through their teachings the importance of cleanliness. In August 2009, I was asked to teach on the same topic (cleanliness) at Mlanda CCAP where women from five congregations gathered for the conference. One month after the conference I received calls from two women, letting me know how their marriages had improved tremendously, after almost falling completely apart.

These women during the conference asked me to pray for their husbands who were going out with other women. I prayed for them but I also advised them to take care of themselves so that their husbands should be attracted to them, rather than turning away from them due to their uncleanness. After looking at the physical impact, women in *Chigwirizano cha amai* are also keen to see the welfare of the church and society. This is done through several development projects, which are explained in the coming section.

2.4.8.3. The developmental impact

After looking into the areas that directly affect women, the *Chigwirizano cha amai* also takes delight in uplifting the welfare of the church and society. One reverend said, “The economy of the church will come to a standstill the moment women stops giving”.

Women with their united spirit have managed to achieve greater projects. For example, *Chigwirizano cha amai* of Kanig’a CCAP managed to build a conference Centre; and *Chigwirizano* of Msonkhamanja CCAP have completed building a very big kitchen, which also has offices for the *Chigwirizano* committee.

These projects are not only for the benefit of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, but for the whole church. For instance, the conference center at Kaning’a is also used by the youth, church elders and even the Synod. The Msonkhamanja kitchen will also cater for the church and youth activities. The whole *Chigwirizano* through the executive committee has a 26 seater mini-bus, which besides helping the owners; it is also used to transport

reverends especially during the synodical meetings from Lilongwe CCAP to Chongoni. It has also constructed houses both at Nkhoma and in Lilongwe city, which have helped to reduce the housing problems which the Synod used to have for its employees. Some houses are used for renting as one way of generating an income.

In 2010, the Executive committee of *Chigwirizano* decided to build a house for a widow who was a reverend's wife. She had a very small and poor house. Unfortunately she passed away just before the house was completed.

Chigwirizano cha amai also has a maize mill at Lilongwe CCAP, which helps to generate an income. Plans are now on the way for renovating an old missionary place at Cape Maclear, which is currently in shambles. The Synod entrusted the task to the Women's Guild. It was last year in 2011 when the Synod executive committee went together with the executive committee of *Chigwirizano cha amai* to Cape Maclear where the handing over of the project was done.

More than anything else is remarkable to see how the church has acknowledged the impact of *Chigwirizano cha amai* on the whole Synod. The church has done this by imitating and introducing *Chigwirizano cha abambo* (Men's Guild) and *cha chinyamata* (Youth's Guild). The Men's Guild has copied everything from the Women's Guild in terms of membership and how to run it. *Chigwirizano cha amai* has also contributed a lot towards the training of Sunday school.

In all the eight presbyteries I have gone to, the number of women teaching Sunday school surpasses any other group in the church. In Nkhoma Synod, there is a very powerful youth ministry. The secret behind this success is nothing else other than the strong foundation built on the Word of God, which these young people received from Sunday school where they were taught by no one else other than the women of *Chigwirizano*. The society has also benefited a lot from *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

In most cases, women are moved to help orphans, widows, people with disabilities and those in need because they try in earnest to emulate the compassionate heart of Jesus. Through their monthly and annual programmes they strive to visit these needy people. For example, in 2009 they visited the Malingunde School for the blind with assorted goods; in 2011, Kalambo *Chigwirizano cha amai* visited the Josophat Mwale Theological Institute (JMTI) with a variety of items. In 2012, Kawira *Chigwirizano*

cha amai brought 25 bags of *mphale*³⁶ (maize) with money to JMTI where the theological trainees have financial and material problems. Every year the executive committee visits and provides different items to all *amai abusa amasiye* (these are widows whose husbands were reverends).

This development impact leads us to another aspect which women are sincerely committed to. This is the moral impact, which I am now turning to in the next section.

2.4.8.4. The moral impact

Chigwirizano cha amai also provides moral support. Most women, try to have the heart of Christ, that is, a compassionate heart. Dube (2003:96) has defined compassion as the reaching out to those who are suffering, as entering their places of pain, their brokenness; and the active search for ways of changing of their situation.

These women are engaging themselves in nothing new but that which Jesus Christ is encouraging in Matthew 25:31-46. So when one is sick in the community, they make sure to visit her/him, pray with her/him and do some manual work, e.g. fetching water and firewood for her/him. When one is bereaved, it is the women who stay at the home of the bereaved for two or three days, comforting them and providing for the needs. They sacrifice their time, energy and property, for the sake of their friend who is going through a painful time.

For example, in February 2012, *Chigwirizano cha amai* stayed at a friend's house for almost five days who lost her child in South Africa, comforting the mother and helping her with the logistics of bringing the body back home. Breugel (2001:262) calls this "Solidarity," and he says this solidarity is especially strong at a funeral (*maliro*). Members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* also make sure that they provide food or clothes if one does not have. They make sure that one's life and environment is transformed for this is what compassion and solidarity is all about. Dube (2003:96) says, "Compassion is transformative." He (2003:97) concludes by saying, "We must be

³⁶ This is the maize that goes through a pounding process (either through manual or maize mill) in order to remove the husks. It is then soaked in the water for three to four days, before going back to the maize mill for flour production.

compassionate, if we count ourselves worthy to enter God's kingdom". Women try to transform the living standards of those who are in need.

Kawale (2001:213) further emphasizes that it is the responsibility of the church to look after those who have spiritual, physical and psychological problems. Women make a major contribution by visiting and counseling the sick, comforting the bereaved and giving assistance to the poor. Phiri (1992:143) comments on this saying, "Women raise funds and collect food for use in caring for the needy".

Looking at how committed *Chigwirizano cha amai* is in terms of its moral support, a certain chief in Area 23, Lilongwe, was compelled to give the Women's Guild from his area *chikho* (a trophy), as one way of appreciating their good works.

As much as we have seen the impact of *Chigwirizano cha amai* on the church and society, still this organization encounters several challenges, which will be discussed in the following section.

2.4.9. The challenges/constraints of *Chigwirizano Cha Amai*

It is by God's grace that *Chigwirizano cha amai* remains a vibrant organization within the Synod. It has been kicked left and right, not only by outside forces but from within the church as well. Hence, one lady compared *Chigwirizano cha amai* to Paul's word that said, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (1 Corinthians 4:8-9). One may ask, in what ways has *Chigwirizano cha amai* been challenged or constrained? It has been through:

2.4.9.1. *Amkhalapakati*

Phiri (1996:85) has defined *amkhalapakati* as either a reverend or church elder who represents the church or the Synod during women's meeting. She says it was in the seventies when the Synod made a ruling that there should be a church elder in the Executive committee of *Chigwirizano cha amai* at both branch and presbytery level, and a minister and a church elder in the central executive of *Chigwirizano cha amai*. Unfortunately, continues Phiri, some of the *amkhalapakati* tend to dominate at *Chigwirizano cha amai* meetings instead of being observers and advisors. It is said that at every *Chigwirizano cha amai* meeting the women were reminded that they are

a branch of the church and are not a church in themselves. They should therefore uphold the unity that exists between the church and *Chigwirizano*; and give church leaders their due respect (Phiri, 1997:85). This made women question the exact status of *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

In as early as 1944, says Phiri (1996:85), questions from women started coming to the central executive committee of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, asking whether *Chigwirizano cha amai* is independent from the church. The response was that it is a branch of the church. As a result of such questions, Phiri (1996:85) says that the committee suggested that once in a while church elders should be asked to attend *Chigwirizano cha amai* meetings. Gondwe (2009:24) says it was the suspicion that *Chigwirizano cha amai* would become a church within the Nkhoma Synod church that forced the Synod to introduce *amkhalapakati*. This was one way of indirectly intimidating women.

Zolamulira (1970:112) has a section entitled “*Kugwirizana kwa Chigwirizano cha amai ndi mpingo*,” which reads: “*A Chigwirizano ali chiwalo china cha mpingo. Asunge umodzi wa mpingo wa Ambuye mwa zochita zao zonse* (Members of *Chigwirizano* are part and parcel of the church. They should therefore endeavor to maintain the unity that exists in the Lord’s church.) Some reverends say *amkhalapakati* are in *Chigwirizano* as representatives of the church and are to report to women the church’s decision pertaining to the Women’s Guild, in the same way they are to report to the session the women’s decision respectively. This is in line with Zolamulira’ comment (2006a:3) which reads as follows: “The *amkhalapakati*’s job may be to watch over *Chigwirizano cha amai* but also to update the session on the activities of *Chigwirizano cha amai* and vice versa”. This means that everything about women is filtered through the voice of the narrator, who is male (Phiri & Nadar, 2006: 78). Another group said, women always need to be controlled by men otherwise they can easily fight for they are short tempered. Gondwe (2009:24) argues that the problem is not that women cannot meet without *amkhalapakati*, but that in the body of elders there are no females who can be assigned the duty of coordinating between *Chigwirizano cha amai* and the session. Zolamulira (1970:15) comments, “In fact as far as the body of the youth is concerned, the Synod put in place an extra minister to monitor the activities of the youth at every presbytery level”.

With this reference one might conclude positively that it is the Synod's system to have a church elder or minister in any church's organization. But Gondwe (2009:25) argues that it should be kept in mind that the youth are regarded as inferior to women, just as they are to men; while women are equally grownups as men in leadership. Hence no need to be supervised by men.

Gondwe (2009:22) says, "Although men assist with the construction of shelters, their influence is far reaching and in some cases undermines the ability of women to conduct their own affairs. A hot debate arose among some women who argued: "Is it still essential to maintain *amkhalapakati* in *Chigwirizano cha amai*?"

The debate came about as a result of a new situation in which women are now elected as church elders. Women do not see any essence in having *amkhalapakati* since they now have women church elders who could represent them in the session. Politely they said, "In as much as we recognize and appreciate the great role that *amkhalapakati* play among us we also think on the other hand it is high time they have trained us". Another lady stated, "Most of the times, the presence of *amkhalapakati* acts as a hindrance to women's freedom of expressing themselves freely".

This is true because every year *bungwe lotsogolera msonkhano waukulu wapachaka* (the leading group of the annual conference) tells all *amkhalapakati* to leave the conference room during the time when women discuss issues which only involves them (women) for example, cleanliness.

This is a clear indicator that women somehow feel bound and uncomfortable with their presence; and they are calling for a paradigm shift from an old way of victimizing women through rules and regulations, to a new paradigm of encouraging and empowering women to be able to operate by themselves. It is amazing that this paradigm shift is not only the desire of Nkhoma Synod women, but also of other African countries, like Cameroon.

The women of Cameroon said that one of their aims is to create a friendly place that both provides support and solidarity and works effectively against the old-age victimization of women; they follow an approach which emphasizes action by women against individual and collective violence (Gnanadason & Kanyoro, 1996:78).

This discussion was on *amkhalapakati* as one of the big challenges *facing Chigwirizano cha amai*. What follows now concerns the preaching of men among women during their meetings/gatherings.

2.4.9.2. The preaching of Reverends' among women

The other analogy which women fail to understand is the choosing of a reverend (man) to preach at their conferences. Gondwe (2009:22) thinks a woman speaker would have been more appropriate for she does not need to be told about problems unique to women which have to be addressed, since she has firsthand experience of these. Women have silently asked why a male reverend, and not a female one? We have gifted preachers like *Mai Jailosi*, *Mai Mlenga*, *Mai Kalongosola*, etc. who could do a good job of preaching as well. In as much as we would love to have male reverends as the main speakers; there are some shortfalls.

One of these have already been diagnosed by Gondwe (2009:22) who explains that a male speaker has to do a lot of research on women before he preaches; as for a woman preacher, she is an encyclopedia on her own. It is in moments like this when a woman reverend is needed. Kapuma (2001:2) says:

In as much as male pastors are important, female pastors can be of great help because they are able to understand the nature and degree of the problem and be in a position to offer solidarity. It is easier for women to understand other women within their struggle because they too have had a similar experience and knows well how they feel.

Kanyoro (2002:85) concurs with Kapuma by saying:

When we advocate for women to be included in the ordained ministries of the churches in Africa ... we are hoping that women pastors will be willing to talk about the reality of women's experiences in their sermons and therefore be able to make connections between church, home and society.

Another obstacle with male preachers is the gap that exists between the preacher and women. Once a girl reaches the stage of puberty, Breugel (2001:187) says she is taught how to behave with regards to men other than her husband, that is, the respect she has to show. This type of culture creates a very big gap between women and men.

In *Kukula ndi Mwambo*, a book which talks about Chewa traditional values, a mother advises her daughters in the following manner: "My daughters, when you are talking

to men, you should know and show that you are subordinate to them because men, even though some may appear small, always have authority over us” (Gwengwe, 1998:89).

This type of attitude makes it more difficult for women who have issues to share their problems with the reverend, seeking spiritual guidance or even answers to questions with regards to his message, except through or in the presence of *amkhalapakati* or pastor’s wife, who most of the times is either hostile or protective, fearing that these women may have a hidden agenda.

There was an incident in Mphunzi Presbytery where a lady came to a reverend’s house with a problem seeking help. She met the reverend’s wife who told her to explain the problem to her before she explains it to the reverend. The lady was finally chased away without the knowledge of the reverend. To avoid such instances, it was suggested by women during the presbytery meeting of 2010, that it is convenient to invite women preachers.

Due to this gap between the male preachers and women, many congregations especially those in urban areas, besides inviting the male preacher, also unconstitutionally invite other women of God, specifically to help women with their various problems.

They pray for the sick, family problems, they also conduct deliverances, etc. Congregations like Chikuluti, Mbuka, Msonkhamanja, Masintha, Kafita, Kachere, Lilongwe, Mvama, Bwaila, Kalambo, Chawa, etc., invite these women of God to help during these conferences.

Another sad thing with regards to male reverends is the criteria they use to choose the main speaker of the conference. In the eighties and nineties, says the leader of the executive committee in 1985, the speaker was chosen according to the theme of the conference and the gift of that particular speaker. In those days, she continued to say, they were mainly looking for those with evangelistic and teaching gifts. The system changed in the late nineties after discovering that some reverends were invited every year, while others were not.

This brought about a wrong interpretation among some reverends, who thought that those who were not invited were not real men of God. Hence, the introduction of a new system where they rotate, giving an opportunity for every reverend in that presbytery to preach. Each system has its own advantages and disadvantages. For example, the old system had the advantage of bringing many women to the Lord and most of them were going back home changed people. The disadvantage, was that it was almost always the same people being invited, leaving other reverends complaining that they are not anointed men of God. The current system has the advantage of incorporating all reverends into the system. Everyone has an opportunity to preach at these conferences regardless of the gift.

The disadvantage, is that even those who are not gifted in preaching at such type of conferences and those who are not even familiar with the topic/theme of the conference are still welcomed, leaving women with spiritual malnutrition because most of them do not really understand what the preacher is talking about. Hence, they go home spiritually unfulfilled. This section focused on the challenge of the presence of men at women's meetings, but this is not the only challenge, women are also faced with the challenge of literature writing which is usually only done by men. This is what the following section is all about.

2.4.9.3. The writing of Mau a Mwezi ndi Mwezi (monthly guide) by male reverends

During the conference of 2009 some women wondered why is it that they are not consulted when formulating the theme to be covered in the monthly guide and the theme of the annual conference. They even wondered why it has always been a male reverend writing these books, as if there are no capable women who can also write? In the history of the Nkhoma Synod and as far as *Chigwirizano cha amai* is concerned, it has always been male reverends writing the themes of women's conferences.

This results in selecting themes of their own choices; at the expense of themes that would be more relevant for the women. It was recently in the late nineties that the Executive committee of *Chigwirizano cha amai* started working hand in hand with the author (a male writer) on the issue of the themes. Sometimes the Committee gives him the theme to focus on, after conducting a small survey on the crucial topics that will

be of great benefit to the women. The author has the final say on either to take the given theme exactly as it is, or to change it.

It is surprising to see *that Chigwirizano cha amai's* challenges do not only come from men but also from women themselves. So the coming section talks about reverend's wives as another stumbling block to this organization of women's guild.

2.4.9.4. Pastor's wives in leadership roles both at Presbytery and Executive Level

Back in 1941, when the first executive committee of *Chigwirizano cha amai* was elected, all leading positions were taken by white missionaries, with Africans taking secondary positions. Phiri says (1997:75) this was not strange for it reflected the fact that missionaries were in control of everything.

The second elections for the *Chigwirizano cha amai* were done in 1944 during the meeting which started from 14th -17th July. It was attended by 130 members. Phiri (1997:75) says during this time even all the leadership roles went to the white missionaries. It was not until 1959, that the first Malawian leader was elected. Her name was Aniya Nabanda; she was a matron at Mlanda Girls' Hostel.

The second Malawian leader was Evenesi Makewana who was elected in 1962. Phiri (1997:75-76) says the changes in leadership of *Chigwirizano cha amai* ... may be explained in terms of the women missionaries preparing Malawian women for leadership ... There was some form of sisterhood between the two racial groups.

It was in 1989, when the Synod decided that only wives of serving ministers could be leaders in the executive committee. Phiri says this decision was reached because reverends expressed an unwillingness to accept leadership from a woman who was not a reverend's wife (Phiri, 1997:76).

It was Mrs Konzakapansi and Annemarie de Klerk who consistently experienced the most rejection by some reverends because they served as leaders of the *Chigwirizano* Executive committee for more than two terms, and were not the wives of reverends (Phiri, 1997:76).

The decision that the leader of *Chigwirizano cha amai* should be the wife of a reverend is not approved by many women; for not all reverend's wives, argues Phiri (1997:76),

have leadership ability. Gondwe (2009:25) concludes that this was done to make sure that reverends and their wives have control of the Synod; as well as *Chigwirizano cha amai*. Phiri sees this from a different angle by interpreting it as the clergy controlling *Chigwirizano* through their wives. She concludes by saying, “The problem for Nkhoma Synod women is not simply patriarchy but also clericalism” (Phiri, 1997:76). To concur with Phiri on her interpretation, it was in August 2011, during the main conference at Chongoni, when reverends pushed their ideas of fighting against women in leadership positions through their wives. It was sad and very surprising to see the wives of reverends fighting against the Synod’s decision of ordaining their fellow women.

2.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter was about the history of women and their role in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod through what is called *Chigwirizano cha amai*. This chapter has unveiled to us how Christianity was brought to the Central region of Malawi, where Nkhoma Synod is situated; and the commitment of the first missionaries to serving God, even under difficult circumstances. The above discussion has also shown that the arrival of the DRCM was more a blessing to men than women.

Though it is true that women have contributed much to education and social work, a question still needs to be asked: Do you not think that these women would have contributed as much to the leadership roles if they were given that opportunity?

Unfortunately, the Synod has used the absence of women in leadership roles during the mission days as a stepping-stone for fighting against any idea of women empowerment through leadership roles. Phiri (1997:69) was right to conclude that: “When the Synod denied leadership roles in the church to women, what they were saying to them is that they were not of the right gender to be used by God in that capacity”.

This chapter also tackled the role of women in the church through what is called “*Chigwirizano cha amai*”. Nobody can talk of women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod without talking about this women’s union. It forms a strongest part of the body of Nkhoma Synod; so much so that the Synod becomes paralyzed without it. This has been shown through its impact on its own members, the church, the Synod and the

society at large. Its impact can be compared to the roles of salt. Salt helps to flavour the food, it can also be used to preserve food and finally, salt also acts as a healing agent.

In the same way, as salt *Chigwirizano cha amai* has made the church and the whole Synod taste good and appetizing. No one can leave the church service without recognizing the presence of women through their teaching of Sunday school, singing and the beautifying of the church. As a preservative agent, *Chigwirizano* has preserved the life and integrity of the church through its stand on the Word of God, prayer and giving. The main pillars of the Nkhoma Synod are the Word of God and prayer. Women of Nkhoma Synod are women of prayer; and women who do not just know the Word but they do what it says.

This is seen through their commitment to the daily morning devotions that take places in their congregations. They wake up as early as 4 am, interceding not only for the Synod but also for the nation of Malawi; they climb mountains to pray and fast for the church of God. Through their giving, the work of God has prospered greatly in the Synod. This has kept the church of God going. As far as healing is concerned, many wounded family relationships have been healed and reconciled.

When men's temper (both church elders and reverends) rise during the session, it has been women back home that have calmed their tempers down with comforting and encouraging words through the Word of God and prayers. The underlying assumption in this chapter is that women through *Chigwirizano cha amai* have uplifted the life, status and integrity of the church; as well as the entire Nkhoma Synod.

This chapter also examined how one becomes a member, how she maintains the membership and how she is re-instated after being excommunicated.

It was observed that the only way of becoming a member and maintaining the membership is by remaining a committed Christian. For by doing so, one remains faithful, both to the church and *Chigwirizano*, leaving no reason for being excommunicated.

Another point that formed part of this chapter was the challenges and constraints facing the *Chigwirizano cha amai*. It was discovered that men still want to exercise

their authority in *Chigwirizano cha amai* either directly (through *amkhalapakati*, preaching during the annual and main conferences and through the writing of *Mau a mwezi ndi mwezi*) or indirectly, through the leadership of reverends' wives.

The core argument and conclusion drawn from this chapter is that: *Chigwirizano cha amai* is a very important part of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Therefore, women leadership becomes a critical topic to be encouraged and implemented starting at congregational up to synodical level.

This chapter was on the history of *Chigwirizano cha amai* where among other things I discussed how the way in which the early missionaries presented the gospel led to the current women leadership problems in the Nkhoma Synod. In the coming chapter, I seek to discuss the same leadership problems, but from the cultural point of view. This is going to be addressed through the Social Identity Theory, which describes how cultural beliefs through identification operate.

CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter one was about the preamble, motivation, research problem, the purpose, hypothesis, method, and the value of the research. Chapter two was on the history of women and their role in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod through the organization known as *Chigwirizano cha amai*. In the history it was shown that the first missionaries sidelined women from leadership roles (See annexure 8, question 2). This is what finally led to the formation of this organization. This chapter now builds on where chapter two stopped because it is going to explain through Social Identity Theory (SIT) if culture has also contributed to the absence of women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Cultural factors will be discussed in the light of this theory. In this chapter as well as in chapter 4, I am answering the question, “why is this going on?”, in view of Osmer’s interpretive task (2008:4, 79-128). This will hopefully help me to come to a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons for the position that women find themselves in within the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.

This chapter then begins with an explanation of why this theory has been selected as the most favourable theory for this study. Firstly, besides it being widely accepted, Social Identity Theory is also currently used within the disciplines of Social and Cognitive Psychology, which uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods. It is a discipline that has firmly established itself within the academic community and has all the outward symbols of intellectual success. It is therefore crucial when conducting a research to use a theory that has been tried and tested and proven to be effective. Secondly, SIT is inherently a social process that involves more than just the individual; it describes the social position of group members relative to one another (Barentsen, 2011:6). It therefore fits well in this study because it addresses the issue of women (which is a group and not an individual) and their leadership roles. Thirdly, this theory does not take place where there is a social vacuum; instead it occurs in a definite social historical context at a specific time. This ensures a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted approach to biblical interpretation and ensures a more accurate evaluation of women leadership within the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Finally, SIT will also serve as the basis for developing a questionnaire in chapter four; and a multi-dimensional approach which will be used in interpreting the two texts of 1 Corinthians

14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 in chapter five. After looking at the reasons for choosing SIT, I now move on to the origins of the theory.

3.1.1. The origin of Social Identity Theory

This theory is believed to have originated from a man known as, “Henri Tajfel,” who was born in 1919 and died in 1982. He had a Polish-Jewish heritage. It was his survival from the Holocaust that led him to initial insights of group membership. Barentsen (2011:33) narrates that Tajfel introduced the concept of social identity in a study of discrimination in a Social Psychology class at Bristol, in England. He (Tajfel) conducted his famous minimal group experiments in which participants were assigned into two groups based on minimal criteria. He discovered that when people categorized themselves as group members, their behaviour changed to favour individuals they now considered as fellow group members; and discriminated against others who were considered to be members of other groups. Therefore, SIT began as an intergroup theory that focused on the dynamics between groups (Barentsen, 2011:34).³⁷ It is this finding that qualifies this theory (SIT) to fit my research because this research focuses on the dynamics between two groups in the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod. These are the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* and men (church elders and reverends). This leads now to the definition of the theory.

3.1.2. The definition of Social Identity Theory

A number of definitions have been ascribed to SIT by various scholars, some of these include: This concept refers to an individual’s sense of internalized group membership. It is a sense of self-association, with an awareness that one belongs to a particular social group; and that this group membership is important and meaningful (Tajfel and Turner, 1979:35). Expanding further on the definition, Brown and Gaertner (2001:136) reports: “Social Identity is a collective self, not a “looking glass self,” it is not an “I” as perceived by the group, but “we” who are the group and who define ourselves for ourselves”. It underpins people’s sense that they are part of a particular organization, a particular nation, a particular club and so on (Haslam, Reicher and Platow, 2011:46). To sum up, Barentsen (2011:38) defines it as, “that part

³⁷ See also Brown and Gaertner, (2001:134); Huddy, (2001:132).

of an individual's self-concept which they derive from their knowledge of their membership of a social group(s); together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership".

From the above definitions, it means the theory has three indispensable elements: An analysis of aspects of collective psychology; specific intergroup status differences in society; and the tendency to deal with one's identity problems as either an "individual" or as a "group" (Brown and Gaertner, 2001:134). Since the origins and the definition of the theory have been discussed, I now go on to the importance of studying Social Identity. This will be addressed through the following questions: What is a group? And, why do people join groups?

3.1.3. The definition of a group

Smith (1945:227) has defined a group as, "A unit consisting of a plural number of separate organisms (agents) who have a collective perception of their unity and who have the ability to act and/ or are acting in a unitary manner toward their environment". Tajfel and Turner (1979:40) have the same idea and write that a group is:

A collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evolution of their group and their membership of it.

In both definitions the element of, "we are a group," comes out vividly as the fundamental group belief. If individuals do not share this belief, then they do not consider themselves to be a group member. Only the individual's awareness that they are a group member determines the existence of the group for them (Bar-Tal, 1989:37). This is what led Brown (1989:2-3) to conclude that a group exists when two or more people define themselves as members of such; and when its existence is recognized by at least one other. After defining the group I now explore the reasons that motivate one to join a group.

3.1.4. The reasons for joining a group

To answer the question, "Why do people join groups?" Researchers have argued that individuals become group members when they perceive that it is in their personal interest to do so (Haslam et al., 2011:46). This concurs with the findings of Turner,

Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell (1987), that people become part of a group because the group itself matters to them; they have a choice to become part of them; and also because they commit themselves to the group.

Napier & Gershenfield (1999:53-75) give three reasons why people join groups: Firstly, because the task or activity of the group is appealing to the individual; secondly, because they like the people in the group; and thirdly, because it is a means of satisfying her/his needs, albeit indirectly. Adding to this, Barentsen (2011:45) says that one of the motivating factors for identifying with a particular group is a sense of distinctiveness; whereby people would want to identify with groups that reflect positively on their self-conception. Foundational beliefs and values are other identified factors which Barentsen (2011:45) lists as motivating individuals to identify with a group.

Summarizing the above points, Rabbie (1991:58) asserts that the central idea here is that groups are comprised of individuals who become interdependent for essentially instrumental reasons: to satisfy their personal interests and their mutual needs. But for these groups to be successful, the determinant factor is what is called “norms”. Let us now see what these norms are.

3.2. GROUP NORMS

These are behaviors, attitudes and perceptions that are approved by the group; they are often expected and also demanded by its members. Such socially established and shared beliefs regarding what is normal, correct, true, moral and good, generally has powerful effects on the thoughts and actions of group members (Baron and Kerr, 2003:6). Sherif and Sherif (1969) see norms from another angle and define them as a scale of values, which defines a range of acceptable and unacceptable attitudes and behaviors for members of a social unit. Failure to adhere to norms can sometimes lead to a social penalty. Sherif (1951:396) says:

One of the products of group formation is a delineation of “we” and “they” the “we” thus delineated comes to embody a whole host of qualities and values to be upheld, defended and cherished. Offenses from without or deviations from within are promptly reacted to with appropriate corrective, defensive and at times offensive measures.

Triska (1962:162-163) gives an example of the rules of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union passed by the 22nd Congress. One of the rules reads:

A party member who fails his duties as laid down in the rules or commits other offenses, shall be called to account, and may be subjected to the penalty of admonition, reprimand, with entry in the registration card. The highest party penalty is expulsion from the party.

This means that norms perform certain roles in the group, which Baron and Kerr (2003:7) explains as follows. Firstly, they say, “Norms are often crucial for the group’s survival or success. Secondly, norms provide codes of behavior that render social life more predictable and efficient. Finally, they say that norms serve to reduce uncertainty and confusion when the environment appears unusual, unpredictable or threatening”. Brown (1989:44) has divided the functions of these norms into two categories. The first category, are those functions which serve the individual; and the second, those that serve the social significance from the perspective of the group itself. The individual norms act as a frame of reference through which the world is interpreted; and they act as “pointers” as to how one is to behave. Sherif (1936:46) says that this idea of norms acts as “signposts,” guiding the individual through unfamiliar territory. For the social significance, Brown (1989:44) says that norms help to regulate social existence and coordinate the activities of group members. They also enhance or maintain the identity of the group (Brown, 1989:44). In summary, Barentsen (2011:48) asserts that, “Identification with a particular group leads to a change in attitude, beliefs, feelings, and behaviour, as one aligns oneself with the in-group prototype”. So these changes result in identity performance, which demonstrates the degree to which these changes have been absorbed by the group member.

So far it can be concluded that the moment one decides to identify with a particular group for the reasons known to her/him, at that same moment an outer group is also formed depending on the comparison. As such, group members see themselves as relatively similar to other in-group members who have the same norms; and as quite dissimilar from members of the out-group. So it is within this framework of comparison that I have developed what I call, “Phases of Social Identity Theory,” in which I will meticulously discuss self-categorization and stereotyping; which is an automatic outcome when the issue of SI surfaces.

3.3. PHASES IN SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Haslam et al. (2011:50) note that when people are assigned to a group and also take on that group membership as the basis for their own subjective self-definition, then

they seek to determine the meaning and standing of the group by making social comparisons between their in-group and relevant out-groups. They seek to define their group favorably by differentiating it positively from out-groups along the dimensions that they value (for example, seeing men as more important and powerful than women). This gives the impression that people want and desire their group to be better than other rival groups. Therefore, in-group bias is primarily a function of in-group positivity; rather than out-group negativity (Brewer, 1979, 1999 and 2001). This psychological quest for positive distinctiveness is not the end of Social Identity Theory. Rather, it is the starting point (Haslam et al., 2011:50). Tajfel and Turner (1979:50) recognized that we live in an unequal world where certain groups are defined negatively. The issue of positive distinctiveness lies behind the question: “Why do people in groups discriminate against each other?” Responding to this question, Brown and Gaertner (2001:134) state that people have a need for a positive Social Identity, which requires them to establish a positively valued distinctiveness for their own group, compared to other groups. This answer is not any different to Tajfel’s (1978a:83) who says, “Because of our presumed need for a positive self-concept, it follows that there will be a bias in these comparisons to look for ways in which the in-group can, indeed, be distinguished favorably from out-groups.” This leads us to the first phase of Social Identity called, “Self-categorization Theory.”

3.3.1. Self- Categorization

McGarty (1999:1) defines self-categorization as, “The process of understanding what something is, by knowing what it is equivalent to; and what it is different from.” The studies of Turner (1982:21) suggest that the mere act of individuals categorizing themselves as group members was sufficient to produce group behavior. These studies showed that it was not independence, economic exchange or attraction that led to group behaviour; but the cognitive process of defining oneself in terms of group membership (Haslam et al. 2011:52). Thus, we participate in a group to the extent that we think about ourselves as “we” and not just “I”. Therefore, Social Identity is the cognitive mechanism that makes group behavior possible (Turner, 1982:21). Self-categorization also emphasizes a psychological process that underpins the transition from behavior that is informed by a person’s sense of her/his own individuality, referred to as a personal identity to that which is informed by Social Identity. To convey the idea that the self is no longer seen in personal terms (as I), Turner uses the

word “depersonalization” (Haslam et al., 2011:52). He has defined it as a process of self-stereotyping through which the self comes to be seen in terms of a category membership that is shared with other in-group members. This process leads human beings to perceive and respond to themselves and others not as unique persons, but as psychological representatives of the group they belong to. It is therefore not wrong to say that depersonalization reflects a higher level, more inclusive and more abstract level of self-categorization. Haslam et al. (2011:53) believes that depersonalization is not only about how we respond to others; but also about how we view and respond to the world in general. So much so that the values and norms that guide our behavior are those values and norms associated with the group with which we currently identify. These also differ from group to group. Fromm (1941:254) uses a different term for depersonalization. He calls it “de-individuation,” which he defines as the idea of a loss of, or lack of individuation.

Hogg & Abrams (1988:140) have defined it to be akin to a loss of personal identity. This means that a de-individuated person is prevented by situational factors present in a group from becoming self-aware; she/he is blocked from awareness of themselves as separate individuals and from monitoring their own behavior. Diener (1980:224-225) regards the psychological state of the group member as being on a continuum from ‘extreme self-awareness to a total prevention of it;’ while according to the theory of Carver & Scheiers (1981a) de-individuation is seen as a shift of self-regulation at a conscious, relatively abstract level, to a lower one. This is not different from the self-awareness theory of Wicklund (1982:226), which says:

To the extent that individuals collect in de-individuated units, thus transforming the unit of analysis from “I” to “we”, the potential of each individual member for the discomfort of self-focus is thereby reduced ... (thus) lowered control via values and personal standards ... a condition just opposite to self-awareness will arise- that of de-individuation – which entails the relaxing of standards and morals.

Hogg (2001:184) differs from the above idea. He says that depersonalization does not necessarily mean a loss of the self but rather a redefining of the self. This means that the depersonalized self is just as psychologically and morally valid as the personalized self to feel, think and act. Only, self-esteem is now determined by the stand of the group such that the self of self-interest now becomes a matter of my group getting the things that the group values. For example, in some groups it might be money or

material things; while for others it might be love or respect. Thus, depersonalization is of vital importance for social behavior and social identity as it assists in the coordinating of activities; identifies which side one is on and the goals that are to be pursued. Besides, depersonalization causes self-stereotyping, where stereotyping occurs in a number of dimensions which are believed to be correlated with the categorization, that is not only personality traits but also behavior, attitudes, beliefs, norms of conduct, emotional reactions and physical appearance (Hogg and Abrams, 1988:74). This means that self-categorization leads to self-stereotyping, which I turn to now as another phase of Social Identity.

3.3.2. Self-stereotyping

Haslam et al. (2011:55) defines self-stereotyping as, “Those who after defining themselves in terms of a particular social identity, both seek to discover the meaning associated with the category and strive to conform to these elements”. Therefore, those who identify themselves as group members need information from others about the meanings associated with the group. But Brewer (1996:254) sees stereotyping as the use of stereotypic knowledge in forming an impression of an individual. Stereotypes are descriptions of groups, though faulty, incomplete, and overly rigid, it extends to group members (Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl & Hull, and 2000:95)

Expanding further on the above definition, Hogg & Abrams (1988:65) describes stereotypes as generalizations about people based on category membership; they are beliefs that all members of a particular group have the same qualities, which circumscribe the group and differentiate it from other groups. This means that a specific group member is assumed to be or is treated as identical to other members of the group; and the group as a whole is perceived and treated as being homogenous. This leads to a tendency of attaching derogatory stereotypes to out-groups; and favorable ones to in-groups (Hogg & Abrams, 1988:65).

One may ask, ‘When and how are stereotypes acquired?’ Milner (1981:45) and Tajfel (1981:12) explain that stereotypes are learnt at a very young age, even before the child has any clear knowledge about the group to which the stereotypes refer.

Stereotypes also have a crucial feature and that is they are shared. This means that large sections of society will agree to what the stereotypes of a particular group are.

For example, the wide consensus that women are emotional despite the existence of numerous exceptions (Hogg & Abrams, 1988:65-66).

Stereotypes are not merely idiosyncratic generalizations, which are coincidentally or haphazardly made by a number of people. Perkins (1979:141) said, “Stereotypes are ... prototypes of shared cultural meanings.” This sharedness, says Hogg & Abrams (1988:75), is due to a social process of social influence which causes conformity to group norms, called “referent informational influence”.

In turn, this process is underpinned by a self-categorization that renders the self stereotypically identical to other in-group members; or to the individual’s representation of the group’s defining features or prototype.

Another aspect of stereotypes is that historically they have been viewed as unjustified because they reflect faulty thought processes of overgeneralization, factual incorrectness, inordinate rigidity, an inappropriate pattern of attribution; or rationalization for a prejudiced attitude or discriminatory behavior (Perkins, 1979:148). Hogg & Abrams (1988:67) asserts that stereotypes are considered to be undesirable because they are factually incorrect, are rigid and resistant to education; and are generated by a suboptimal reasoning process which represents the short-circuiting or bypassing of intelligence. But Heatherton et al. (2000:88-89) say that even though they are inaccurate to varying degrees, stereotypes also serve fundamental functions for the perceiver. These functions are:

1. They provide explanations for other’s behavior supporting the perceiver’s motivation.
2. They satisfy needs for cognitive closure.
3. They enhance personal and collective self-esteem.

Tajfel (1981b:22) has divided the above functions into two, namely: Individual and Society functions. I will explain here, the individual functions, although they are not directly applicable to *Chigwirizano cha amai*; but so as to be able to make a comparison with the societal functions, which are applicable. For the individual functions, Tajfel suggests that stereotypes serve as:

1. A cognitive function, which brings the world into sharper focus.

2. A value function, which refers to the way in which stereotypes (because they evaluative) contributes to the value systems of individuals.

As for the social functions, Tajfel (1981b:25) says that stereotypes serve as:

1. A social causality, which refers to the search for an understanding of complex and usually distressing large-scale social or non-social events.
2. Social justification, which refers to the elaboration of a specific stereotype of a group, in order to justify actions committed or planned against that group.
3. Social differentiation, which refers to the tendency for ethnocentrism, in this case own-group enhancing stereotypic differences, to be accentuated under conditions in which intergroup distinctiveness is perceived to becoming eroded and insecure or when social conditions are such that, low status is perceived to be illegitimate and changeable.

This discussion on stereotypes will be brought to a close after discussing the issue of development, that is, how do stereotypes develop? Heatherton et al. (2000:92-94) lists four ways:

1. Through the factor of groupness which is based on membership in a definable group.
2. Through role division or segregation at the societal level, especially in the domain of gender stereotypes where beliefs about gender are shaped by the observation of women and men in different roles in daily life. Because women are often seen in domestic roles and men in the labor force, stereotypes that fit these roles have developed. For example women are nurturing and communal; whereas men are energetic.
3. Through physical characteristics of an individual, or a group of individuals, in which perceivable stimulus qualities provided in a person's movement, vocal qualities and facial expression, provide socially useful. This results in people making systematic, although often overgeneralized, judgments of others' characters. For example, because women tend to have more homogenous features (like large eyes, full lips) than men, women as a group are more likely to be stereotyped along these lines than are men.
4. Through attributions whereby physically disabled individuals are asked, "How did this happen?" The answer in this case may determine beliefs about the person, as well as affective reactions and behavior toward the individual.

Let me conclude the issue of Social Identity by summarizing its relevance. Haslam et al. (2011:64) gives three points clarifying the significance of Social Identity: (1) It tells us who we are, how we relate to others, who we can and cannot rely on, what is important in the world and how we should act within it. (2) It allows individuals to be effective in the world as agents of a group that shapes the world, unlike subjects who are shaped by the world. (3) It creates the collectivities that serve to sustain or challenge the status quo. They act as monitors of both social stability and social change.

After explaining the whole theory of Social Identity, together with its phases and relevance, I now move on to the application of this theory to the women of *Chigwirizano cha amai* in CCAP, Nkhoma Synod.

3.4. THE APPLICATION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY TO WOMEN AND THEIR ROLES IN CCAP NKHOMA SYNOD

3.4.1. The formation of Social Identity

In as far as Nkhoma Synod as a whole, and *Chigwirizano cha amai* in particular, is concerned, there are three criteria for the formation of Social Identity. These are the history of the first missionaries; the Chewa culture; and the Bible. In chapters one and two, I discussed how the first missionaries contributed towards this formation of Social Identity. In the current chapter (three), I demonstrate how culture too is playing a role in forming Social Identity. I will unpack the final criteria, that of the Bible, in the coming chapter (chapter four). As already indicated in chapter one and two, women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod are particularly well known for their organization known as “*Chigwirizano cha amai*” (Women’s Guild). You cannot talk of women in this Synod without relating them to this group of women. Phiri (1997:71) has defined it as an organization of Christian women who are united in their service for the Lord. The creation of this group gave women the opportunity to share the Word of God, something that was not there before (Gondwe, 2009:18). No place was given to them in the Church where they could exercise their godly given gifts. After the

establishment of *Chigwirizano cha amai* Linda Naphiri (Mthenga, 1940:n.d.)³⁸ is quoted saying:

I am strengthened by John 9:4 Now that we have been sent to do God's work, even though we are women, we can do it. We have realized in a new way that women are not useless Acts 2:17 says, 'In the last days God says I will pour out my Spirit on all the people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy' Who are daughters? Are we not the ones?

The quoting of these two texts by Linda Naphiri proves the power and relevance of Biblical references, unlike just sticking to one particular verse where you cannot clearly understand its meaning. With this reference, Linda was able to understand that although she is a woman - she has been sent to do God's work because God has poured out His Spirit on all people, on both men and women.

The membership of this organization is upon the individual's choice to join and serve God, the Church, and the community at large. Here we see the theory of Social Identity coming into full play. The moment an individual makes a decision to join *Chigwirizano cha amai*; she refers to herself and other members of this group as "us". Her sense of self has now changed, and she recognizes herself as part of this particular organization (Haslalm et al., 2011:46). It is not an "I," as perceived by the group, but "we," who are the group and who define ourselves for ourselves (Brown and Gaertner, 2001:136). Chapter two explains in detail the solidarity and power of *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

They perceive themselves to be members of the same social category; they share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and their membership of it (Tajfel and Turner, 1979:40). So the existence of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, but also that of men (church elders and reverends), is determined by the individuals' awareness that they are group members. Hence, the element of "we are a group," comes out vividly as the fundamental group belief. At the centre of these two different group

beliefs, lies the Word of God. But the problem is that even though *Chigwirizano cha amai* and the leadership of the church use the same Bible to strengthen their Social Identity, it is amazing that the results are totally different. Men are saying women should not take up leadership roles because the Bible says they should be silent (1 Corinthians 14:34-5). Women are saying we need to take up leadership roles because the Bible says we are all equal in the eyes of God, where there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28). What both groups need to know is that women as well as men, are made in the divine image of God and therefore, any pattern of discrimination, domination or oppression is contrary to God's justice and sovereignty (Kanyoro, 2002:17).

So far I have explained how an identity of *Chigwirizano cha amai* is formed. It is formed when each woman personally decides to identify herself no longer as an "I," but as an "us," the group, and thereafter live according to the norms of the group. This is more clearly explained in the following aspect of Social Identity called "depersonalization".

3.4.2. Depersonalization

In *Chigwirizano cha amai* all activities are done as a group. Even in situations where she is alone, this woman will still not identify herself as an "I," but as "we," members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*. Here we see the element of depersonalization coming into full manifestation because the self is no longer seen in personal terms as "I" but it is seen in terms of a category membership that is shared with other in-group members. This process leads members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* to perceive and respond to themselves and others not as unique persons but as psychological representatives of the group they belong to.

The result of depersonalization is that the person is not treated as an individual woman. This means that she receives the benefits that would not have been accorded to her if it were not for this Social Identity of being a member of *Chigwirizano cha amai*. A good example is the issue of "status". Culturally (after the coming of other tribes like the Ngoni), and historically, Chewa women have been treated as people of low status (Phiri, 1997:43, 113).

She is a person who is ill treated from her own household up to the society. She is oppressed by her own husband and by the society at large. Now, when such a person joins *Chigwirizano cha amai*, she becomes a changed person whose status automatically gets uplifted. This results in a change in perception from the society towards her as well, because *Chigwirizano cha amai* on its own is highly regarded by both the Church and society. Therefore, anyone joining this organization, regardless of her background – whether poor or rich, whether downplayed by her husband or by the society, she is accorded the same respect which is given to the group.

Another example is the death of a member of *Chigwirizano cha amai*. It is amazing to see that the death of an ordinary member of *Chigwirizano cha amai* is highly regarded; than the death of a rich member of the church. Upon the death of a member of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, all members of the group are commanded to dress in the uniform of the group. This is the respect only given to church leaders and not local members. Women, who are not members; and other church members who do not belong to the above two mentioned categories, are not treated as such. In most cases, it is a prerequisite for reverends and their wives to attend her funeral service, unless otherwise stated.³⁹ As for the death of other members, the minister can delegate a session clerk or any church elder to conduct the funeral service on his behalf.

This organization of *Chigwirizano cha amai* has also helped to avoid the differences and fill the gap between the rich and poor during the gatherings. It is very hard to identify who is rich and who is poor for they all dress equally. This eliminates feeling inferior. All women are treated equally; they eat the same food and sleep at the same place. They put on the uniform of *Chigwirizano cha amai* as already indicated in chapter two which is made up of a white headgear, white blouse, white belt, black skirt and black shoes. With this attire no one feels out of place. Everyone feels accepted and part of the group. Even the poorest woman blends in and looks like anyone else

³⁹ The reverend and his wife really need to have justified excuses for them to miss the funeral service of a member of *Chigwirizano cha amai*. One of the reasons is that by the virtue of being a reverend and a reverend's wife you automatically become members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* to whom everyone looks up to as their role models. As members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, you are obliged to attend funeral service since it is one of the duties which you vow on the day of your induction to carry out (See 2.2.4, rule number three).

in the group. If she cannot afford to buy the uniform, some members of the group make sure to buy one for her because they identify with her as being part of them. The issue of uniform as a prerequisite for every member to have is one of the “norms” required by *Chigwirizano cha amai*. This will be discussed next.

3.4.3. Norms of *Chigwirizano cha amai*

Baron and Kerr (2003:6) have defined norms as behaviors, attitudes and perceptions that are approved of by the group, expected, and often demanded by its members (see 2.2.5-2.2.6.2 for the norms of *Chigwirizano cha amai*). This definition shows that norms play an important role in the survival or success of *Chigwirizano cha amai*. Norms determine the success of the group, in that by virtue of its nature, it deduces who should belong to the group and who should not. The moment an individual abides by the norms of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, automatically she remains a member. In the same way, the moment one breaks the norms, she automatically also detaches herself from the group. Norms also determine behaviour, actions and attitudes, such that one is bound to behave, act and think according to the norms of the group. Failure to do this, for example, in *Chigwirizano cha amai* results in firstly, receiving a warning; and secondly, to expulsion if one does not change. They also provide codes of behavior that render one’s social life more predictable and efficient, especially in times of death, where norms have served to reduce uncertainty and confusion. These norms have made *Chigwirizano cha amai* to stand out from other Church groups. This point leads to another important aspect of how “self-categorization” is manifested in *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

3.4.4. Self- Categorization

Self-categorization refers to how individuals mentally order their social world (Brown, 1989:221). McGarty (1999:1) has defined it as the process of understanding what something is, by knowing what it is different from. However, Brown (1989:222) argues that dividing the world into categories does not only serve the cognitive function of helping one to simply make sense of it; but it also helps one to define who they are. Therefore, we do not only perceive others as members of one group, but we also in turn categorize ourselves. This understanding automatically creates what is called “inter-group”. Unfortunately, Mullen, Brown & Smith (1992) say that mere social categorization may be sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination. Brown

(1989:222) says this is so because at the center of Social Identity is the importance for individuals of being able to see their group as positively distinct from other groups. Phrasing the same idea differently, Tajfel and Turner (1986) suggest that favoring one's own group in this way reflects a need for positive self-esteem (if my group is good, so am I). It is proved by Brown (1984:22) that it is possible to observe in-group bias in situations in which groups are explicitly linked by cooperative goal relationships. I now introduce the two categories in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.

These are *Chigwirizano cha amai* and the Men's Group (mainly comprised of male church elders, deacons and reverends). The fact that these two groups rely on each other for some activities does not deter them from intergroup hostility or intergroup discrimination. The reason is because the roots of intergroup hostility run deeper; arising from very basic needs and modes of thinking (Baron and Kerr, 2011:160). The Men's Group tends to favour the members of their own group against members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, and vice versa. They are nearly always more fair to in-group members, than to out-group members. They show so much in-group favoritism that in-group members receive much more favorable ratings than out-groups members. For example, when a male reverend has been promiscuous, he is just moved from one congregation to another; but if a female commits the same sin, it will result in church discipline or being excommunicated from partaking in Holy Communion. This issue of favouring in-group members becomes a very big problem especially when it is related to their deepest commitment to God. Therefore, the question to ask at this particular time is, "What is it that determines the "in-group" and "out-group" in the body of Christ? Thus, the issue of favouring questions one's commitment to God because in the eyes of God, gender difference has no role to play, since all people are viewed as being equal.

Another good example is the issue of leadership positions in the Church. Here, women have either been exempted from attaining these positions; or have been chosen reluctantly, with a lot of conditions and reservations attached to it⁴⁰. This issue of

⁴⁰ For example, no widow or single woman is allowed to become church leaders regardless of her commitment and calling.

sidelining women from church leadership roles is not a recent problem. It is dated as far back as 1889, when the first missionaries brought the gospel to the Nkhoma Synod.

Phiri (1997:49) writes, “The missionaries’ image and understanding of the place of women in the Church in the 19th century was based on a specific interpretation of Genesis and the letters of St Paul. Hence subordination of women was thought to be divinely sanctioned.”

It was the reaction from this tradition that women decided to form their own group whereby they could be free to share the Word of God among themselves; and serve God freely. After acquiring all leadership positions (with very few exceptions), men were and still are, unsatisfied. They continue to intimidate women to show that they are still in control, even of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*. This is shown in different ways either directly or indirectly for example, the idea of *amkhalapakati* who acts as the church’s representative (See, 2.2.9.1). His presence among women undermines their worth of reporting their activities or programs by themselves to the church’s session.

The mentality of favouring and undermining one group at the expense of the other is what Ackermann (1988:17) is discouraging in her approach to Practical Theology through her three aspects of liberation; salvation and praxis (see 1.7.1-1.7.3).

Another example is what we see in 2.2.9.2, where even during women annual meetings, it is the male minister in charge who preaches the Word of God. They consider women as incapable of preaching the Word of God. Unsurprisingly, during *Chigwirizano cha abambo* (Men’s Guild) there is no female representative. These are just some of the ways of keeping women subordinate to men in the church. Through this they make their (men) group more powerful and superior; and reduce the *Chigwirizano cha amai* group to being inferior. This has sometimes resulted in competitive responses so that their group is seen as positively distinct from other groups.

It is remarkable how self-categorization operates because the moment you perceive others as members of one group, you simultaneously categorize yourself as another group. What does this now imply for members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* of the Nkhoma Synod? It implies that the moment members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* perceive the church elders and reverends as one group; they categorize themselves as

another group, which is also susceptible to biases, favouritism and positive distinctiveness. It is differences such as these, and competitiveness, that finally breeds to stereotypic behaviours, which will be discussed in the coming section.

3.4.5. Stereotyping

I will in this section discuss Chewa cultural factors by making use of Social Identity Theory through the lenses of “stereotyping”.

It refers to those who define themselves in terms of a particular Social Identity; and seek to discover the meaning associated with that category, as well as strives to conform to those elements (Haslam et al., 2011:55). In short, Brown (1988:234) describes stereotypes as referring to members of the group that are seen as similar to one another on that particular dimension.

It was suggested in chapter one (1.3.3.2) that CCAP, Nkhoma Synod has stereotyped women. This aspect has its roots in the culture, church history; and the history of biblical interpretation (1.3.3.3; 4.1.1) Although the Chewa culture originally had a matrilineal system, it was explained in chapter one that due to the attacks of the Portuguese and Ngoni, together with the coming in of the early missionaries, the system changed to that of a patriarchal type of leadership. Below are some of these Chewa cultural factors which have have been used to stereotype women.

2.5.1.1.3.4.5.1 Women are weak vessels

Women have been portrayed as the weaker vessel. As weak vessels, women and girls have been culturally abused and victimized in several ways, e.g. rape, incest, defilement, divorce, etc. It is inhuman acts such as these that make Oduyoye (2002:13) argue who is the weaker sex, women or men? Here are a number of questions aimed at men who consider themselves to be strong: Should men not learn to be responsible for their own sexuality? Are men incapable of self-control? Which then, is the weaker sex? If men are stronger and superior should this not apply to their total being? Why, then, is this irresponsibility of weak-willed men blamed on women?

As weak vessels women have been assigned roles in accord with their status, i.e. child bearing and home management. Oduyoye (2007:3) affirms this by saying, “Women have to spend the period from the onset of puberty till the arrival of menopause bearing

and rearing children”. This means that women are excluded from being reverends, evangelists, deacons and church elders (Phiri, 1997:43). They are given social work and home craft. Women and girls are given little education with the purpose of being good wives and not to become economically independent (Phiri, 1997:48).

So both the culture and history has sidelined Chewa woman where she has specific roles to play. From childhood, a girl knows what she is expected to do; and that is to draw water, fetch fire wood, take care of smaller children, cook, go to the maize mill, clean the house and plates, wash clothes, etc. She is not expected to do tough work like building the house, digging graves, clearing the land (*kupanga mphanje*), etc., for these require more power, and are therefore assigned to the men. Even the CCAP Nkhoma Synod sees women in this way. Women are perceived as being weak, and are therefore assigned particular roles, i.e. cleaning the church, visiting the sick, singing in the choir, welcoming visitors, counseling girls, sleeping and singing throughout the night at a funeral, etc. In the past, women were not expected to take up leadership roles for that was the man’s job. There has now been a slight change, in that the Synod announced the acceptance of women leadership; but some congregations are still resisting this decision, thinking they are weak.

2.5.1.2.3.4.5.2 Women are second class citizens and the property of men

Kanyoro (2002:27) asserts that by virtue of belonging to the female gender, women constitute an oppressed social group. The social construction of roles and status relegates women to an inferior position; thus, as a result of the socialization process a myth has been propagated that women are inferior human beings; and in some cases, less than human. Women in the Chewa culture are relegated to be second-class citizens; while men are considered as belonging to the first class. As such, men are capable of taking up leadership roles; while women are incapable of assuming such roles due to their status.

2.5.1.3.3.4.5.3 Women are a source of evil

It was assumed in 1.3.3.2 that women are regarded as a source of evil. It is indicated in this Social Identity Theory that it is possible for an assumption such as this to take place through stereotyping. The Chewa culture perceives women as the source of evil by their very nature of being women. This is evident in gatherings where women are

seated separately from men based on the concern that by sitting together men will end up being either enticed or coaxed by them. Similarly, the CCAP Nkhoma Synod has emulated the culture. In the church, women and girls have their own place to sit, positioned parallel to that of the men and boys. Such mentality may contribute towards the resistance of women in leadership. Besides the fear of enticing men, women have also been labelled as gossipmongers; and are therefore not suited to taking up leadership roles, which demand privacy.

3.5. CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, I considered the position of women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod through the lenses of Social Identity Theory - the theory of Henri Tajfel. I discussed the origin, definition, importance and phases of the theory. I also demonstrated how SIT is used in *Chigwirizano cha amai*, through the aspects of depersonalization, norms, stereotyping and self-categorization. It was discovered that through depersonalization a member of *Chigwirizano cha amai* no longer identifies herself as “I,” but “we”. This strengthens the bond in the organization for no one acts as an individual but as a group. It was also discovered that the moment *Chigwirizano cha amai* categorized itself as a group of Christian women within the Church, another group of men was automatically created. This resulted in an ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group,’ with each group perceiving itself to be more superior and distinctive; an element which leads to the rise of competition and distinctiveness.

I concluded by discussing cultural factors by making use of Social Identity Theory through the aspect of stereotypes. Through examining these cultural factors, it becomes clear that women in the Nkhoma Synod are considered to be weak vessels, second-class citizens; as well as the property of men and a source of evil. These beliefs have resulted in women being victimized and sidelined from leadership positions because they belong to people of higher status. This has in part answered Osmer’s earlier question of why this is going on. By using the scripture that women are weak vessels and therefore should not take up leadership roles is a total abuse of scripture, because even in 1 Peter 3:7 it says that, “Wives are to be treated with respect as heirs with husbands of the gracious gift of life.”

So in short, Social Identity Theory has helped to some extent to shed light on why women have been sidelined from leadership roles. According to this theory, it is

because of the framed cultural beliefs and systems which people have identified themselves with. Thus, what we see outwardly (the oppressive and discriminative behaviours), are the manifestations of these unseen cultural forces. The following chapter is on the interpretation of the Bible according to the Nkhoma Synod and other parts of the world.

CHAPTER 4: THE INTERPRETATION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35 AND 1 TIMOTHY 2: 11-12 ACCORDING TO NKHOMA SYNOD AND OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

4.1. THE HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF THE TWO TEXTS (1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2: 11-12)

It was indicated in 1.3.3, that there are some background factors contributing to the problem statement. Two of these factors have already been dealt with in chapter two when the history of women and their role in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod was discussed; and in chapter three when the culture was discussed through Social Identity Theory. I will now in this chapter explain the way the two texts of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 have been interpreted, first in the Nkhoma Synod; and then in other parts of the world. As indicated in chapter 3, this chapter again is trying to answer Osmer's question of why is this going on? The interpretive task I am embarking on here is that of explaining why there are few women in leadership roles in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.

4.1.1. In the Nkhoma Synod

It was indicated in chapter one that the Nkhoma Synod is using certain Bible passages to prohibit women from attaining leadership roles. The history of the Nkhoma Synod goes back to 1889, when the first missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church from Cape Town came to Malawi; as such, the Synod proudly calls itself, *ife ndife a Dutch*.⁴¹ Having their roots in the Dutch Reformed Church, the Nkhoma Synod adheres to the Presbyterian doctrine. Presbyterian and Reformed Churches⁴² both trace their heritage back to the 16th Century, where Calvin's writings still form the basis of their religious thought.

⁴¹ This saying means that they are conservative in the sense that they adhere to the teachings of the early missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church in Malawi.

⁴² See Vyckie 2009.

With this Presbyterian background, the Nkhoma Synod is well known among other Synods (Blantyre, Livingstonia, Zambia and Harare) to be very strict when it comes to observing the Word of God.⁴³

Some well-known old reverends, for example, Reverend Chalera, a retired minister, is still remembered for his rhetorical saying, *tcheni pa kalanka*⁴⁴ As much as this is a true picture of the Synod when it comes to its stand on the Word of God and *zolanulira*⁴⁵, the question to ask is, how does it interpret some of the scriptures especially those related to the leadership of women in the church? One reverend⁴⁶ said to me during our conversation that *tcheni pa kalanka* can only be fruitful if it complies with the correct interpretation of God's Word. Reverend Dr. Msangayambe during his induction at Msonkhamanja Church on 6th January 2013 said that *tcheni pa kalanka* without the Holy Spirit is useless.

The interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 has done more harm than good to the Synod of Nkhoma. The reason for this is that a lot of people especially the leaders (some church elders and reverends) of the Synod have used (abused) these texts as a tool of denying women from attaining leadership positions in the Church. This is what the researcher is trying to achieve through the research purpose (1.4.3) in which she, among other reasons, looks at the way the Bible was interpreted to support the exemption of women from leadership roles. Therefore, it has been suggested that a thorough interpretation of the texts should be done. Phiri (1997:50) affirms that the debate concerning women in leadership roles in the Nkhoma Synod could be dated from September 1966 when a question was raised at a Synodical meeting whether women should be ordained. The matter was referred to the Joint

⁴³ This statement is just spoken by a lot of people who come from these other synods and join the Nkhoma Synod, or vice versa. It is not documented.

⁴⁴ This is a very common saying especially among the old reverends, but now it is even quoted by the young reverends; and other Christians. It denotes a strong adherence to church rules and regulations and church polity.

⁴⁵ This is a book of rules and regulations of the Nkhoma Synod. Each and every reverend and church elder is asked to have this book. Unfortunately, some of these leaders have put much emphasis on this book at the expense of the Bible. They have in most cases referred their followers to what this book says and very rarely have they told these Christians what the Bible says.

⁴⁶ Due to ethical reasons, this reverend preferred not to be identified by name.

Theological College to discuss the biblical principle of allowing women into the theological college.

A year later the Synod's representative on the Theological College Board reported to the Synod that the Board agreed that female students may be admitted but only where the sending Synod has some special work for them, for instance, women's work, but not with the view of ordination (KS 828 of 1967)⁴⁷. On the 10th of July 1968, the Synod committee asked the General Secretary and his deputy to discuss the possibility of enrolling more women at the Institution in the future with the principal of the Theological School (KS 1282 of 1968)⁴⁸.

Brown (2005:58) reports that at the Ninth Meeting of the Synod, held in August 1968, it was firmly declared that women were not to be ordained. Women receiving theological training were only to teach other women.

During the nineteenth meeting of the Synod which took place at Namoni Katengeza Lay Training Center from 5th - 12th of April 1983; the Synod maintained its decision that women should not be elected to the offices of church elders and deacons (S 1713 of 1972)⁴⁹. When the pressure and debate kept on growing on the leadership of women, the Synod (S 1867)⁵⁰ during its fourteenth meeting (10th – 16th April, 1975) changed its tone.

Instead of being so negative and radical towards the issue, it said, "Synod agrees that this is a very good thing but the time is not yet ripe. Meantime let things remain as they are." When the issue was brought to the table again in 1991, the Synod was more

⁴⁷ KS 828 stands for the number of the minute of the Synod committee. Synodical committee minutes are numbered continuously from the first meeting to date. This specific minute is taken from the Synodical committee meeting of 1967.

⁴⁸ KS 1282 stands for the number of the minute of the Synod committee. Synodical committee minutes are numbered continuously from the first meeting to date. This specific minute is taken from the Synodical committee meeting of 1968.

⁴⁹ S 1713 stands for the number of Synod minute. Nkhoma Synod minutes are numbered continuously from the first Nkhoma Synod assembly to date. This specific minute is taken from the Nkhoma Synod assembly of 1972.

⁵⁰ S 1867 stands for the number of Synod minute. Nkhoma Synod minutes are numbered continuously from the first Nkhoma Synod assembly to date. This specific minute is taken from the Nkhoma Synod assembly of 1975.

straightforward in its approach. It said, “We do not approve women to preach at any time and we do not also allow them to take up any leadership positions.” In 1995 the Synod confirmed, “Women should not be elders, deacons or be ordained (Brown, 2005:58). One may thus wonder whether the response that was given in 1985 during the twentieth meeting of the Synod that women ordination is a good thing that we are only waiting for the opportune time was really genuine.

Gondwe (2009:103,105,107) summarizes some of the reasons that the people of the Nkhoma Synod gave him with regards to why women should not become deacons, church elders and ministers:

1. Paul demanded that women should learn in silence (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).
2. The Bible states that women are weaker than men, therefore cannot be good leaders (1 Timothy 2:11-14; 1 Peter 3:7).
3. Jesus had male disciples only, so why should we include women in leadership?
4. When Adam and Eve sinned, God demanded an account from Adam and not Eve.
5. When women are menstruating, it will not be appropriate for them to go up to the pulpit to preach.
6. It should suffice for women to be mere helpers and not to be in control.

These arguments which are generally quoted show that some members of the Nkhoma Synod interpret 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 in the light that women should not be ordained as church elders, deacon and reverends. Going against what these texts (literally) say has been described as being unbiblical, ungodly and pagan.

As the pressure mounted for women leadership in almost every synodical meeting, the Synod of 2007 decided and declared that women should now start preaching on either a Wednesday or Sunday, during the church service. Another declaration was made during the Synod meeting of 2009, that women could now be elected as elders and deacons; but not as reverends.

These two decisions brought mixed reactions not only among the reverends but also among the members of the Synod. For example, Mr. Chisenga of William Murray

Secondary School cites a speech of another man⁵¹, now a church elder at Nkhoma CCAP, who openly said, “I cannot attend a church service whose leader/preacher is a woman. I will definitely go out of the church.” To him, this type of speech and decision shows that women preaching or taking up leadership roles is regarded as unbiblical and evil and therefore he cannot associate himself with it. This is a good reason for him to get out of a service that is being led by a woman.

It is this type of scenario that Phiri (1992:275-276) tries to address, that of using a fundamentalist ⁵² interpretation of the Bible (without accounting for their own presuppositions) as a basis for denying women from taking up leadership positions in the church, like that of their male counterparts. She asserts that although ministers try to interpret the passages that affect women’s involvement critically, they are influenced by prejudices against women (Phiri, 1992:277). She concludes by saying that this type of interpretation has affected the positions of women detrimentally. I refer to this type of interpretation as a literal one-dimensional approach, in which the historical-cultural and theological-rhetorical aspects are not taken into consideration.

During the 2011 Synodical meeting, the Synod received the following questions from congregations and presbyteries⁵³ pertaining to the issue of women leadership. These questions/comments were a direct reaction to the Synod’s decision⁵⁴ made in 2009,

⁵¹ For ethical reasons I have chosen not to mention the name of the person who said these words.

⁵² These are extremists, people who believe that the Bible does not allow women to take up leadership roles

⁵³ It is the system of the Nkhoma Synod that the year of its bi-conference, which takes place once every two years, congregations, presbyteries, sessions and individual reverends write down questions, either on church doctrine or the Word of God. There are mainly two procedures for sending these questions to the Synod. The first one is when the church and the reverend (session) writes down the questions and sends them to the presbytery where they are also scrutinized. When they cannot be answered at the presbytery level, it is then that they are referred to the Synod. The second one, is when the session or the reverend can sometimes send their questions directly to the Synod without going through the presbytery. These questions are to be at the Synod office two months before the conference for compiling purposes ready to be discussed during the meeting. The answers given here are binding, to be followed by all congregations. If there is a need to change the decision, then it is the same gathering or the committee of the Synod who have the powers, otherwise neither a congregation nor a reverend has the power to change any synodical decision.

⁵⁴ All the decisions of the Synod are first reported to the church session (the gathering of church elders, deacons and the reverend) and thereafter reported to the whole congregation during the church announcements.

which stated, “The time has come for women to become church elders and deacons (S4143 of 2011)⁵⁵ and to continue preaching during the Sunday services”⁵⁶ (S4143).

1. Why can the Synod not go back to the Word of God which clearly says that a woman should not have any authority in the church by becoming a church elder or deacon for this is in conflict with God’s Word according to 1 Timothy 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 3:1-6?
2. The Synod should reconsider the decision of ordaining women as church elders and deacons for it has divided our Synod. This is a strange doctrine; this is the reason that up to now some congregations are resisting to ordain women as leaders.
3. After reading 1 Timothy 2:11-14, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, 1 Timothy 3:1-2, Acts 1:21, 6:2, 19:6-7, and Exodus 18:17-22 we discovered that these passages completely stop women from becoming church leaders. Hence, the decision made in 2009, which uplifted women to leadership positions, is paganism. After all, even Jesus in the gospels never had women disciples (Matthews 10:11-14, Mark 3:13-19 and Luke 6:12-14). We, therefore, ask the Synod to reverse its 2009 decision for the sake of maintaining the holiness of God in the Church.

In this section I was looking at how the Synod (especially men, the decision-makers) has interpreted biblical passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-14 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. The literature review has in part answered Osmer’s question of why this (the situation in the CCAP Nkhoma) is going on. Accordingly, there are few women leaders in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod because of the way some leaders and preachers interpret biblical passages such as 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. It is clear that these passages – according to their interpretation – forbid women from

⁵⁵ S 4143 stands for the number of Synod minute. Nkhoma Synod minutes are numbered continuously from the first Nkhoma Synod assembly to date. This specific minute is taken from the Nkhoma Synod assembly of 2011.

⁵⁶ In 2007, the Synod allowed women to preach from the pulpit to the whole congregation and then in 2009, they were allowed to be ordained as church elders.

carrying out leadership roles, for it is considered to be unbiblical and pagan⁵⁷ at the same time. This serves as an example of interpreting the Bible using a one-dimensional (literal) approach.

The problem with this approach is that it gives the impression that the Bible originated from within a historical vacuum; that it was without a socio-cultural context. Another problem is that the Synod never accounted for their ways of reading the Bible, namely, that of only selecting anti-women texts instead of more liberating passages of Scripture (such as Gal 3:28). In this regard, Ackermann (1985:36) asserts that liberation is considered as the core concept at the very heart of the Christian gospel, which is seen as containing within it the need for human liberation. Unfortunately, some people misuse the Bible for their own oppressive purposes and objectives. West (1995:93) affirms that this abuse of the Bible is based on misinterpretations of biblical texts to support or promote oppressive intentions.

After having looked at the Nkhoma Synod's one-dimensional way of interpreting Scripture, I will now discuss the history of interpretation of these passages in other parts of the world, beyond the borders of Africa.

4.1.2. The history of interpretation from elsewhere in the world

4.1.2.1. *1 Corinthians 14:34-35*

In general, two main arguments stem from this text. The first argument has to do with those who claim that Paul meant women should be quiet and not preach at all; while the second group argues that Paul was not debarring women from preaching the Word of God. I will now briefly discuss these two streams of arguments.

- **Women should be quiet**

I start with the argument of Donald Arthur Carson (1987), a professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He is the author of fifteen books. I decided to use his voice based on his background as the author and editor of 57 books, including one which is a commentary on 1 Corinthians 12-14, that I have used in this

⁵⁷ According to Hendriksen (1964:109), woman exercising authority over a man is considered as unholy tampering with divine authority, therefore it is wrong and forbidden.

study as a foundational text. He has also written on the debate of using gender-inclusive language, which is now a controversial issue as far as women issues are concerned. Being an expert in the field, he has the knowledge of the topic that I am currently dealing with in this research, and for this reason I have extensively consulted his work.

Carson sees the demand for women silence as an absolute rule both in the public arena, as well as in small group gatherings. Carson lists the following reasons why Paul silenced women. He says, some of the women were too noisy, and therefore could not be taken seriously. His second argument is based on education that some women were uneducated, and could therefore not teach. Finally, it was due to the high risk of women making themselves guilty of heresy (Carson, 1987:125-126).

Another argument comes from Phillip B. Payne (2011:218) who served in Japan for the Evangelical Free Church Mission for seven years. He has also taught New Testament Studies at Cambridge, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Gordon-Conwell, Bethel and Fuller Theological School. He is known for his studies on textual criticism, the parables of Jesus and Paul's teachings on women. This biography is what has prompted me to use his voice for it is a valuable contribution to my study topic of Women and their leadership roles in the Nkhoma Synod. Payne (2011:217) asserts that in a Greek public meeting, I Corinthians 14:34 would not have sounded extreme because the normal convention was that women were not allowed to speak. He quotes Plutarch (A.D. 46-120) giving advice to the bride and groom (Proverbs 31):

Not only the arm of the virtuous woman, but her speech as well, ought to be not for the public, and she ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of outsiders, since it is an exposure of herself ... for a woman ought to do her talking either to her husband or through her husband ... if they (women) subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are commended, but if they want to have control they cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of their control.

Beside the Greeks, Payne (2011:218) continues to argue that even in the synagogues women were both generally and in principle forbade from speaking in public. He is of the view that women's public prophecy must have upset many people, who would welcome the demands of 1 Corinthians 14:33-34. Payne (2011:218) further strengthens his argument that women should be silent by looking at the repetition of the words, "women should not speak in the church." He says these words are said

thrice. He believes that this repetition maximizes its demand. He explains that in the Greek and Hellenistic Roman world, “threefold utterance of a word, expression or sentence gives its full validity and power ... three is characterized by fullness and solidarity.

Therefore, says Payne (2011:218-219), “Consequently, the threefold repetition calling for the silence of women without qualification in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 must be given its full validity and power, namely, that in the churches women must not speak, period”.

Another contribution that advocates the silence of women in the church comes from C.K. Barrett (1968), professor of Divinity at the University of Durham. Having a British heritage and also being a writer on 1 Corinthians, one of the texts I am dealing with prompted me to use his contribution in this dissertation. For keeping a good balance, I thought it also vital to consider voices from the European context so that their interpretation of the same texts can also be made known, that of 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Barrett (1968:330-331) assumes there was a special disorder in the Corinthian assembly which lead to what he calls, “a very awkward” scenario of refraining women from speaking in the church and having them ask their husbands at home. As for the unmarried women and the wives of unbelievers who wished to learn, he argues, they presumably persuaded married friends to put questions to their husbands. Barrett (1968:332) asserts that Paul had been informed of feminist pressure (possibly of feminine chatter) which was seriously contributing to the disorder of the Christian assembly in Corinth and which led him to take energetic measures to stamp it out. In the interest of peace and order he commanded the women to be silent.

The above arguments were from various people who favor the interpretation that women should be quiet in the church. After looking at this kind of argumentation, I now turn to the second argument, namely, “women should not be quiet”.

- **Women should not be quiet**

The previous section was on how other parts of the world have interpreted 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. The section was about the people who have interpreted the text

to mean that women should not preach. This section will discuss the arguments that support the notion of women speaking/preaching in the church.

Anne Eggebroten is a founding member of the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus; and a teacher of women and religion at California State University. I have chosen her contribution based on the fact that she herself is a woman. In doing so, I wanted to hear how some women interpret the texts which are referred to concerning issues of gender. In addition, choosing her voice is one way of acknowledging what women can achieve and thereby also promote their work. She gives various evangelical feminist approaches to the two texts referred to in this study (Eggebroten, 2010:22).

The first one is that Paul is speaking to a unique situation in Corinth that does not (necessarily) apply to later generations. The second approach is that women in the audience should not whisper and disrupt worship but are allowed to preach.

She therefore says in conclusion that if women consequently have to be silent and not hold office in the church, one would have to overlook Paul's requirement that anyone who prays or prophesies must have her head covered (1 Corinthians 11:5). One would then also have to get rid of Paul's praise of Phoebe as a deacon (Romans 16:1) and his greeting to Junia (Romans 16:7).

Another voice in this category of argumentation is Howard Marshall, a former pastor, and editor of Leadership Magazine for pastors. His way of approach to the issue of women was my main motivating factor of considering his work in this paper. He believes that the Bible's teachings about God's love and care for humans are not gender specific. This is also coinciding with the liberation theology of Ackermann (2014:3) who also discourages the issue which she calls "sexism," or "gender specific". She says sexism is the key to all social oppression. Marshall (s.a.)⁵⁸ starts off his argument by saying, "I'm bothered by scriptures that seem to devalue women. Paul writes that women should stay silent in church because it is disgraceful for them to speak (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). Is this really what God thinks?" Marshall believes this

⁵⁸ s.a. means sinne anno=without year (Dyk, T., & Coetzee, M, 2010:15).

text is comprised of two groups of people. He calls the first one “complementarians.” These are people who believe in distinct and specific roles for men and women; their roles complement one another. He has called the second group “egalitarians.” These are people who believe that these verses were primarily intended for the specific culture of Biblical times, when women did not have the educational and cultural advantages they have today. They are called egalitarians because they believe men and women have equal access to all roles in the church and home. Marshall is of the view that the Bible’s teachings about God’s love and care for humans are not gender-specific. Jesus’ life and ministry showed that time and again. This teaching is also found in Galatians 3:28. God loves and values all men and women.

The third contribution comes from Carol A. Newsom (2012). My motivation behind choosing her is because her work titled, *Women’s Bible Commentary*, is comprised of the essay on the reception history of women in the Bible. She also addresses important questions and explores the implications of how women and other marginalized people are portrayed in family life, while challenging long-held assumptions.

Newsom, (2012:564) begin by saying,

To illustrate the diversity of the body of Christ, Paul (1 Corinthians 12:13) asserts that ‘in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks; slaves or free and we were all made to drink of one Spirit’. This was reproduced more fully in Galatians 3:28 that included ‘male and female’ among the cultural division overcome in the body of Christ.

With regards to 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, Newsom (2012:564) explain that these verses extend from 14:33b to 14:36; and the question they raise is, “How can women exercise their acknowledged right to pray and prophesy (1 Corinthians 11) if they must keep absolute silence? How can women like Prisca (Rom 16:3, 1 Corinthians 16:19), Mary (Rom 16:6), Junia (Rom 16:7) etc., function as co-workers in the churches if they cannot speak in these churches? How can Phoebe fulfill the role of deacon (Rom 16:1-2) if she cannot speak out in the assembly? Newsom (2012:564-565) therefore conclude:

The most likely explanation for the text is that the words on women's silence were originally what is called a 'marginal gloss'⁵⁹ because the attitude expressed in these verses corresponds not to Paul's expressed views but to the views of the later church which opens a next debate, namely on the dating of the different New Testament documents (1 Tim 2:11-12; 1 Pet 3:1-6).

I close this section with the argument of Winsome Munlo (1987) together with other authors whom he quotes like Flanagan and Talbert. His choice is basically based on the fact that he is a man who has also tackled the issue of women. I believe it is authentic to hear the voices of sex, men and women, to avoid being one-sided. They are of the view that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is far from trying to silence women. Instead, they argue, Paul was actually championing their right to speak.

According to Winsome (1987:24), Flanagan and Talbert say that the words in this text are not Paul's, but are instead a quotation of what his opponents were saying in order to refute them. Munlo (1987:28) also acknowledges the idea raised by Bilezikian (1985:24) who refer to what verse 36 says, "What! Did the Word of God originate with you ...?" From this idea, Munlo comments: "This view is ingenious, and can certainly be helpful in freeing the text from its oppressive connotations for those who see it as normative at every point."

Munlo asserts that there is nothing in the text that indicates that the disjunction is between the prescription to be silent and the view of the writer. It could just as well be between the view of the writer and what was actually taking place that of women making themselves heard (Munlo, 1987:28).

Munlo (1972:152-153) summarizes his argument by saying:

The teaching of the pastorals and related material is polemical and prescriptive rather than entirely descriptive ... such material bears witness to a different state of affairs with which it is at odds, and which it seeks to combat. Clearly there would have been no need to insist that women should keep silent in Christian assemblies unless they were making themselves heard to a significant degree. The fact that the subordination of women receives particular emphasis in this material

⁵⁹ These are comments added in the margin of a manuscript by a later reader and then a copyist, uncertain of the origin of the gloss, incorporated the words into the text of the letter, inserting some in one place, others in another.

suggests the presence of an opposite tendency in the early Christian movement.

After surveying the voices of other people on the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, I now proceed to analyse comments that have been made on 1 Timothy 2:11-12. This is yet another controversial text which the Nkhoma Synod uses to deter women from leadership roles in the church.

4.1.2.2. 1 Timothy 2:11-12

Just as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, the text of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 has also called for at least two different arguments, namely, those who are against women leadership; and those who are for women leadership. Below are some of the interpretations which have been deduced from this text. I will start with those who are against women ordination in view of 1 Timothy 2.

- **Women should be silent and not be ordained**

I will start with Luke Timothy Johnson, a professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Candler School of Theology, Emory University in Georgia. I decided to use his work here because he is a Catholic New Testament scholar. I feel it is authentic to have voices from different denominations. He inaugurates his interpretation of 1 Timothy 2 by giving its main idea or purpose (Johnson 1999:441). He says that the author of this epistle wanted order, propriety and graciousness in the domestic lives of believers and the liturgical life of the community.

On the liturgical life, Johnson (1999:441) points out three very specific directives. First, prayers are to be said for all people, especially rulers (2:1-4); second, male members who pray with uplifted arms, should not have anger or quarrelling among them (2:8); finally, he gives instructions about women, the contrast between luxurious external adornment and the life of internal virtue (2:9-10) and the prohibition against teaching in the assembly or having authority over men (2:11-12). Johnson (1999:442) is of the view that the instruction here focuses on the cultural unacceptability of women teaching in public. He says that women are to give instruction only in private for their children. He summarizes his argument in this way, “What I learn overall from these few remarks about worship is that it involves public prayer and teaching and that both of these activities are male prerogatives” (Johnson, 1999:442; see also

Hendriksen, 1957:109).⁶⁰ By saying that public prayer and teaching are both male prerogatives means that Johnson is engaging in stereotypic behaviour (3.3.2) because he is describing the group (of men) as members who have the same qualities.

The second argument under this rubric comes from Payne. See 3.1.2.1a for his biography and the reason why I have chosen to use his voice here. He first of all identifies the problem that Paul was trying to address, namely, false teaching which mainly affected women. Payne (2011:384) writes:

There is evidence that women lacked the training in scripture available to men and that women were particularly susceptible to the false teaching. Since their message would not be welcomed it would cause the kinds of controversies troubling Ephesus and would be more likely to be perceived as dominating.

Therefore, Payne explains further that the goal of the double prohibition (not to teach and not to dominate a man) would be to stop the major source of the false teaching and to shield the church from a major source of conflict and from a bad reputation due to women dominating men. These women in Ephesus were deceived by the false teaching of assuming authority for themselves to teach men, which could lead to a corresponding fall of the church, because it would be particularly offensive and reflect poorly on the gospel (Payne, 2011:385). The basis of Payne's argument is on the words "assume authority", that is, to act on one's own authority. Payne (2011:391) explains that the authority that is assumed is an authority that had not been properly granted, so it carries a negative connotation. He therefore says that this understanding of "assume authority" reflects Paul's central concern in 1 Timothy, to counteract false teachings. In this interpretation, Paul is not permitting a woman to assume authority that had not been properly delegated to her

Payne (2011:391) explains further:

What Paul says is this: I am not permitting a woman to teach and assume authority over a man, namely, to take for herself authority to teach a man without authorization from the church. Practically, this

⁶⁰ Looking at it from the other angle, Hendriksen thinks it is completely impossible for a woman to be ordained. He says that a woman should not enter a sphere of activity for which by dint of her very creation she is not suited. He compares a woman yearning to exercise authority over a man to a bird trying to dwell under water; and a fish trying to live on land.

excluded women in Ephesus from assuming to themselves authority to teach men in the church.

This restriction of women is a change from Paul's earlier description of teaching in the church as open to all believers. The change comes as a result of the crisis of the influence of false teachers over women that exposed a danger in the open approach to worship that Paul had advocated earlier (Payne, 2011:398). The restriction is therefore necessary in order to keep the false teachings from being associated with church teachings.

Payne sees the utterance in 1 Timothy 2:11, "Let women learn in full submission," as a positive idea, since Paul's goal is that if they learn in submission they will repudiate the false teaching. His use of the present tense, "I am not permitting," gives evidence to the hope that the danger of the false teaching will subside to such an extent that the Ephesian believers would be able to practice a more open form of worship (Payne, 2011:393-394). He concludes his argument by emphasizing that it is in light of the particular influence that the false teaching had on women in Ephesus that Paul temporarily prohibits them from assuming authority to teach men.

A third contributor under this subheading is Jones Kelly, former principal of St. Edmund Hall in Oxford. His voice was chosen due the fact that he has written commentaries on the Pastoral Epistles, of which one of them is 1 Timothy, the text I am also using. Secondly, his Scottish and English background could provide fresh insights for a change; and I would like to hear what other authors have to say besides those from the American context, with regards to the issue of women and their leadership roles.

Kelly (1963:68) starts his contribution by referring to 1 Corinthians 9:4-15 and 14:33-36. He says that Paul grudgingly recognized women to pray and prophesy aloud at meetings, presumably because the women concerned were under the influence of the Spirit. Otherwise, he absolutely forbids them to address the congregation and imposes silence upon them.

Kelly then proceeds to 1 Timothy 2:11-12, where he asserts that for a woman to teach in church is tantamount to her wielding authority over a man and to dominating him, which was regarded as contrary to the natural order in that context. The basis of the

argument in 1 Timothy has to do with Eve in the Garden of Eden. Here, Kelly (1963:68) comments: “Since Eve was so gullible, a victim of the serpent’s wiles, she (woman) clearly cannot be trusted to teach”. Teaching in church, according to him (Kelly, 1963:69), is a masculine task but childbearing is that which belongs to women. Here again stereotypes (3.3.2) are ascribed to women. All women on earth are labelled untrustworthy, oppressed and victimized solely because of one woman.

I close this section with two African women’s voices, those of Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro (1992). Oduyoye is a leader in the World Council of Churches, author of *Hearing and Knowing*; and co-editor of *With Passion and Compassion*. Kanyoro is a Kenyan theologian and the head of the women’s division of the Lutheran World Federation. They are for women ordination but in this case they are explaining the arguments given by those who are against women ordination. I chose them because they represent an African point of view, bearing in mind that women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod are also from Africa; therefore, there is a possibility for some similarities. Another reason is their direct use of 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1992:209-210) say that the common argument against women leadership in the church is that women are divinely decreed to be subordinate to men, and thus, there was no basis for their ruling over men in whatever capacity. They say this discriminatory position is supported by 1 Timothy 2:11-12. The basis of their position is that women are portrayed as the weaker vessel since the fall of humanity at Eden through Eve – which is regarded as evidence of female vulnerability. Furthermore, women are sometimes seen as ritually unclean through the flow of blood during menstruation, as well as during childbirth. Since the church is considered to be a holy place, and the position of officiation at worship and church administration are usually the exclusive prerogative of holy people, women are therefore deemed unfit for these roles (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:211). Based on these texts, Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1992:110) assert that these conservatives (those whose stand is against women leadership) tenaciously reject the possibility of women priests and resist calls for radical revolution of this practice.

The preceding section emphasized several voices whose interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is that women cannot be entrusted with leadership roles. The following section

will focus on scholars who hold a completely opposite viewpoint, namely that women should be ordained, using the same text to justify their position.

- **Women should learn, teach and be ordained**

After having looked at the interpretation of the two given texts as being against women ordination; this part will look at those interpretations in favour of women ordination, using the same passage of 1 Timothy 2:11-12. The first argument comes from Richard Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger. It is encouraging to see a couple voicing out their understanding on women leadership. This gives a very balancing point of view towards the topic. Who else can resist or by-pass their contribution? That was my main motivation for choosing them. Another factor is that Catherine has travelled around the globe opposing violence and the abuse of women; but also advancing the biblical basis for the shared leadership and authority of females and males. They begin their argument by identifying the problem that Paul was trying to address, namely, false teachings. Paul tells Timothy to admonish certain individuals to stop teaching a different doctrine and not to give heed to myths and endless genealogies (1 Timothy 1:3-4). Kroeger & Kroeger (1994:60) call this false teaching “Gnosticism”. The concept comes from the Greek word “gnosis” which means knowledge. Gnostics claimed that they had a special, secret knowledge. They taught that all matter is evil and that the Creator, the God of the Hebrew Bible, is evil because he had made the material world. It believes that the serpent was beneficent in helping Adam and Eve to shake off the deception perpetrated on them by the Creator, and Eve was the mediator who brought true knowledge to the human race (Kroeger & Kroeger, 1994:60). This teaching opposed traditional Jewish scriptures; it distorted Bible stories in a most radical way. It is from this background that Paul stops women from teaching and tells them to be silent because women were more connected with this false doctrine (Kroeger & Kroeger, 1994:63, 66), especially the telling stories which contradicted the Scriptures.

Women were assuming greater statuses as principal mediators of the gods. In chapter two of 1 Timothy, Paul begins by saying, “therefore”, because he is drawing his argument from what has preceded, namely that of false teaching.

He therefore wishes prayer to be made because of the spiritual danger, both to people's faith and to their personal lives (Kroeger & Kroeger, 1994:67). He thereafter provides advice on how this prayer should be conducted and how women should dress, since ostentation in dress was frequently considered a sign of promiscuity in the ancient world, and the enormous expense was unjustified in view of the plight of the poor (Kroeger & Kroeger, 1994:75).

Regarding v.11, Kroeger and Kroeger (1994:75) say that rabbinic scholars were required to learn in silence for this was how one gained knowledge of God. Silence, then, was the duty of the learner. They go on to say that the phrase "silence and submission" is a Near Eastern formula implying willingness to heed and obey instruction, in this case contained in the Word of God.

Paul is therefore arming women with truth so that they might stand against error. On the issue that women should not teach, Kroeger and Kroeger (1994:81) begin by saying, "A prohibition against all women instructing men in any manner would find difficulties with other materials in the Pastorals such as Titus 2:3-5, 2 Timothy 2:2 and 3:14-15". Kroeger and Kroeger (1994:83) assert that the apostle here is addressing a particular circumstance, rather than laying down a widespread interdiction against the leadership activities of women. His use of the present tense may also indicate that his decree had to do with a situation contemporaneous with the writing of the epistle. On the same point, Kroeger and Kroeger (1994:83) quote John Toews, who suggests that when the word occurs in the Septuagint, it speaks to a specific and limited situation rather than a universal one. Kroeger and Kroeger (1994:84) also look into the manner of teaching that is prohibited for women. They cite incidents where heretical women frequently served as the officiants in the initiations; and within such frameworks of initiation there would be ample room for both teaching. Kroeger and Kroeger (1994:86), asserts that there is a possibility that the author is forbidding such cultic practices.

The Second contribution is from Carol A. Newsom (see 4.1.2.1 for their biography). Newsom (2012:598) argues that because the author spends so much time and effort to enjoin silence on Christian women, suggests that the actual and accepted practice of women was active and vocal and that the author was attempting to change this behavior. With regards to verses 11-12, Newsom (2012:598) asserts that the author

(who is not Paul) explicitly prohibits women from leading public prayer and teaching. This injunction is likely evidence that women were publicly praying and teaching. Therefore, this author who is claiming to speak as Paul and saying, “I permit no woman ...” is attempting to use Paul’s authority to control the women’s behavior.

Newsom (2012:598) asserts that Paul, together with the historical practices of early Christian women, confirmed by other New Testament and non-canonical texts (1 Corinthians 11 and Rom 16), suggest different and more active roles for women.

The final contribution in this section is from Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1992). They begin by defining “ordination” as the act or ceremony of making someone a religious leader or priest with the privilege of administering the sacraments (1992:208). With regards to women ordination, Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1992:211-212) are of the view that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is not directly supported by Scripture, because Jesus did not rule women out from the priestly vocation. Jesus preached equality to men and women. These two women argue that though His twelve apostles were males, the role of women and the place Jesus gave them in His ministry cannot be underestimated. They give examples of Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Priscilla and Phoebe who stand out as religious exemplars. Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1992:212) believe that the priestly vocation is the result of God’s call in which people who receive it respond by undertaking training to serve as priests. They say the importance of this call is that it is God who takes the initiative for choosing persons for the priesthood; an initiative that is not dependent on human discretion. This means that women who are called qualify for the priesthood in fulfilment of God’s call; therefore, for men to exclude women who believe they are called by God to the priestly ministry limits God and replaces God’s will with human will and prejudices, with all their errors and inconsistencies (Oduyoye and Kanyoro, 1992:212-213). With regards to 1 Tim 2:11-12, Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1992:215) argue that Paul’s stance on the role of women in the church is not essentially anti-feministic; but rather arises from his recognition of the women church leaders of his time like Phoebe, Priscilla, and etcetera. However, they assume that Paul’s injunction on women could be due to his Jewish background and love for respect and orderliness in the church; otherwise he affirms the equality of all people under God and in Christ (Oduyoye and Kanyoro, 1992:216; see also Galatians 3:26-28).

This section focused on the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 by scholars who argue for women ordination in view of these texts. So far I have covered the interpretation of the Nkhoma Synod (4.1.1), as well as interpretations from other parts of the world (4.1.2). I now round up this section with a preliminary conclusion.

4.2. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

The literature study has shown here that there are some people in other parts of the world who also have similar interpretations to that of the Nkhoma Synod, namely, that women should neither preach/teach, nor be ordained. Their argument is that the Bible does not allow them to do that. The brief literature overview has also shown that in other parts of the world these same texts have been interpreted differently, namely, towards allowing women to preach/teach and be ordained. I showed in chapter two that with the passing of time some of the conservative churches have opened up their structures and beliefs to women ordination and teaching (1.3.3.2); while as for the Nkhoma Synod, it is still a hot debatable issue. The conclusion from the above discussion is that the problem on how to interpret these two texts is not only a challenge for the Nkhoma Synod, but also a worldwide issue. So the issue at hand then, is not on whether there is a problem on how to interpret 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. The information in this chapter, and also that of chapters one and two have clearly shown that there is a problem; and this problem has to do with a one-dimensional interpretation called ‘literal reading’. I want therefore, to briefly explain in this preliminary conclusion the limitation of this one-dimensional approach.

A one-dimensional approach refuses to accept the reality that any text is written within a particular socio-cultural context. As such, it interpretes the message as if the Bible existed in a vacuum and this risks the danger of preaching out of context. Kanyoro (2002:19-20) recognizes the importance of what she has called “social and cultural hermeneutics”. She says, “I came to the realization of the importance of culture in people’s lives and the consequent influence of that culture on the interpretation of the Bible”. What Kanyoro is saying is that people read the Bible through the eyes of their culture; and they apply a mirror-image reading by which their culture gives meaning to the texts of the Bible. We have seen that Oak (2008:1) emphasizes that culture gives an individual a unique identity which shapes her/his thinking. The question then

becomes: Which identity (the biblical or cultural one) ultimately serves as the *primary* identity for Christians – a lens through which the other is viewed, critiqued, and challenged? Phrased differently: How were biblical perspectives (of liberation, salvation and praxis, to use Ackermann's terms) supposed to interact with the cultural values and norms in the socio-cultural contexts of these texts? How was that supposed to happen through the centuries, and how is it supposed to happen (in Malawi) today?

In summary, a one-dimensional approach lacks a comprehensive exegetical-hermeneutical approach. Theologically, it ignores the encompassing and dynamic nature of the message. Historically, it typically ignores the socio-cultural background of a text, as the world from which it originated and within which it was to make sense in the first place. Also, a one-dimensional approach often disregards and underexposes the literary context of a text. There is, therefore, an urgent need for rectifying this deficiency – by coming up with a multi-dimensional approach which puts into consideration a comprehensive exegetical-hermeneutical approach. This will be explained more fully in chapters 6 and 7.

Since this is just one side of the coin where we have heard what a literature study reveals on factors leading to the absence of women in leadership positions (chapters one to four), I now move to the other side of the coin, that of doing some empirical research. This part of my research will be mainly based on finding out whether the problem of women leadership is as a result of historical, cultural or biblical factors, specifically according to the perception of members of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapters one, two, three and four formed the foundation of this current chapter, in that they provided the basis for interpreting the empirical data that I now have. It was indicated in chapter two that the way the first missionaries presented the gospel has affected the status of women in the church, with regards to their leadership roles. It was also indicated that this situation led to the formation of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, as a means to address this crisis regarding women leadership. Then, chapter 3 introduced Social Identity Theory which explained why women were being treated in this manner. This theory was chosen based on its nature. It fits best because it explains how groups are formed; and how these groups classify and identify themselves at the expense of the other, which is called stereotyping. The leading scholars in this field of Social Identity were Tajfel, Turner and Haslam, among others. They were chosen based on their expertise with regards to this theory.

The current chapter 5 will provide, interpret and translate the decoded empirical data which was collected by the researcher. The main purpose is to determine the ways in which the present problem, that of the lack of women in leadership roles, are affected by the history of the first missionaries, cultural factors and biblical interpretation. The hope is that the empirical research in the form of semi-structured focus group interviews will provide clarity in seeking answers to the basic research questions.

5.1.1. The research method

As already indicated in chapter one, the researcher conducted qualitative empirical research among the female members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, male elders and reverends from the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. In a qualitative approach, the focus is on interpretation, and therefore concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values, etc) within their social world (Snape & Spence, 2000:3). The questionnaire was formulated based on the information collected through the descriptive-empirical task in chapters one and two; the interpretive task on social identity in chapter three, and the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 in chapter four. The data was collected between January 2013 and July 2013, through focus group interviews.

Focus groups are group discussions organized to explore a specific set of people's views and experiences. This method was chosen here because it complimented the research design in the following ways:

1. It was used to explore people's experience and knowledge.
2. It is interested in the social context of public understanding.
3. It encouraged people to talk to one another, ask questions and comment on each other's experience.
4. It enabled the researcher to examine what people think, how they think and why they think that way.

Verbal discussions were held with 25 focus groups of 122 people. Each group consisted of four to five people at a time. The discussion lasted for 1 hour 30 minutes or 2 hours. The interviews were tape recorded. The people in these groups were more or less of the same gender who normally interact with one another either at the church or in other forums of society and of the same age range. For the qualitative part of the research, as indicated earlier on in the introduction to this chapter, the researcher interviewed members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, male elders and reverends of the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod. The researcher then proceeded to sort, organize and analyse the qualitative data through what Mason (1996:128) calls, "Non-Cross-Sectional Data Organization". This is a device that is used to sort data that does not necessarily use the same lens across the whole data. It essentially looks at discrete parts, bits or units within the data set, and documents something about those parts specifically. It is a practice guided by a search both for the 'particular,' rather than the common or consistent; and the 'holistic' rather than the cross-sectional (Mason, 1996:128). I chose to use this method because of the following reasons:

1. I wanted to gain a sense of distinctiveness of different parts of the data which might not be provided by the cross-sectional themes.
2. This method of data organization was the right one to provide the most appropriate form of analysing the data.
3. I wanted to organize data around themes, issues and topics which do not appear cross-sectionally in the data set.

4. My main emphasis was on the context; on how things work in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, especially among women and the leadership, but also among women in the society.
5. I wanted to understand interwoven parts of the data set, social process, complex narratives and practices (Mason, 2008:165-166).

The criteria behind choosing the three groups of respondents is based upon the reality that they are the ones who are mainly involved in the issue of women leadership roles. Members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* were identified because the this issue of women leadership centres around them, therefore, it is crucial to hear their voices as to how they regard the issue of women in leadership.

Male elders are the decision makers; they act as “the engine” of the church. The approval or disapproval of any decision in the church lies with them. Therefore, ignoring their views or contributions on this subject will result in having a false perception of the current situation of women leadership. As for the reverends, their role at every congregation is that of a father. They play a pastoral paternal role, guiding their sheep (members) in the right direction. In as much as the church elders are the decision makers, they would always seek advice from the reverends before implementing a decision. This means, in the congregations where there is a good relationship between the elders and reverends, the reverend is the one who provides the final decision; but in the case where the relationship is poor, the first thing that happens is that the elders loose trust and respect for the reverend, and so when it comes to decision making they completely disregard him. Thus, the decision to involve the reverends in this research process was based on the fatherly role that they provide to the church. To illustrate, we have a picture of a triangle in which the reverend is positioned at the top (being the father), with the elders on the right end as the decision makers; and the women on the left end as receivers of the decisions that are made.⁶¹

⁶¹ This is just the general information, which members of the church including church elders have and this is what they expect from the minister.

5.1.2. Data collection procedure and data analysis

The researcher made use of two research assistants who helped with the collection of the data. The criteria for choosing them were as follows: 1) they are devoted members of CCAP, Nkhoma Synod; 2) both of them are familiar with the basic aspects of the research because they too are students at two different theological schools; 3) both of them are from the Central Region of Malawi, therefore, there are no language barriers. The researcher, being fully aware of cultural barriers between men and women, decided that the research assistants should be of sexes, a young lady and a man. The researcher decided to use research assistance for two reasons: (1) Because of the nature of the research itself; it was a huge work just to be covered by one person. (2) Because of its sensitiveness; since the issue of women leadership is still hot among the members of the CCAP Nkhoma, research respondents would have been very conservative in providing the information to the researcher who is a ministers' wife. It was therefore very vital to engage in other people who would not raise people's suspicion on why they are being interviewed.

A young lady interviewed women only; and the man interviewed elders and reverends. This was deliberately done so as to create an environment which is conducive to collecting the data. This type of environment was necessary for the interviewer and the interviewee.

The initial contact was made with the reverends, elders and chairladies of *Chigwirizano cha amai* of the targeted congregations. Through them, the actual date and place for the interviews was set. The research assistant had the questionnaire comprised of eight open-ended questions which were asked and discussed during the focus group interviews. This qualitative data was then transcribed and organized through the non-cross-sectional data organization (Mason, 1996:128-129). The following paragraph is on how the data was analysed.

After the data was collected through the tape recorder, I transcribed and translated it. After that, I read the transcripts carefully while identifying the outstanding themes which were written on the margins' side. All the themes were then collected and analysed one by one. I finally summarized the findings.

5.1.3. Profile of respondents

As indicated in 5.1.2, the two research assistants that assisted with this study were a young lady and a man. The young lady is a student at the African Bible College; while the man is a student at Josophati Mwale Theological Institute, which belongs to the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod. Both of them are committed Christians of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod.

Due to ethical reasons, the names of the congregations and people will not be mentioned. Members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* will be labelled C1-C12, male elders will be labelled E13-E20; and the reverends will be R21-R25.

5.1.4. Organization of data (Non-cross-sectional data organization)

The data collected from the 25 focus groups was organized through the non-cross-sectional data organization (Mason, 1996:128-129); where it was divided into three groups, namely, members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*; male elders; and reverends. Then the researcher organized the eight questions into three codes: (1) The current relationship between women and the church leadership; (2) The impact of the first missionaries, Bible interpretation and culture; (3) The change of women's status in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. This means that with these three codes, the researcher was able to fit the collected data into the different categories.

5.1.5. Pilot study

A pilot study is a mini version of a full-scale study (also called a feasibility study); as well as the specific pre-testing of a particular research instrument, such as a questionnaire or interview schedule (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001:1). Stauffacher (2013:103) asserts that pilot studies are a crucial element of a good study design. With regards to this research, I conducted two pilot projects in which I had three focus groups: one for women, another one for elders; and the final one for reverends. The purpose behind this pilot study was to: (1) Find out if the formulated questions were effective and applicable to the target group. (2) To identify any problems during this study. (3) For the researcher to familiarise herself with the questionnaire and the respondents. At the end of the exercise it was ascertained that the project was indeed helpful in that the researcher was able to revisit the questionnaire whenever necessary;

the material was more familiar; and there was overall more certainty regarding the actual research project.

5.1.6. Research ethics

In order to proceed with the research, correct procedures needed to be in place with regards to research ethics. For instance, the ethical clearance letter from the University of Stellenbosch was signed (see Annexure 3 up to Annexure 7). Thereafter, permission was granted for the researcher to actually carry out the research project. After working through the introduction, research method, data collection procedure, profile of respondents, organization of data, pilot study and research ethics; it is now time to focus on the actual empirical research findings. This will be done in the next section.

5.2. THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

The empirical research findings are the results which have been collected from the respondents after administering the questionnaire to the various focus groups. In the following section the question is given first, followed by the responses from both the women and men.

5.2.1. Analysing the current relationship between women and church leadership

The first category of empirical data to be analysed comes from the way various respondents answered the current relationship between women and church leadership. The research question was: **You are at a gathering and a person asks you about the current relationship between women and the church leadership (decision makers, for example, reverends, elders and deacons). What story would you tell about something that has happened to you or a friend you know to illustrate this relationship?**

The relevance of this question is that it will be helpful to find out if there is any relationship between the women and the church leadership. If the answer is yes, then this question will help to describe the type of relationship that exists.

The way the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* responded to the question on the current relationship between women and church leadership will be analysed first.

Since this whole topic revolves around them, it would be vital to hear their perceptions of the relationship, which is based on first hand experience.

2.5.1.4. Members of Chigwirizano cha amai

Members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* were free to offer as many contributions as they could with regards to how they perceive their current relationship with the church leadership. Their contributions were first coded, organized through the non-cross-sectional data organization system; and then classified into three sub-topics, namely: (1) Good relationship; (2) Poor relationship; (3) Both good and poor relationship. Those who said ‘good relationship’ will be analyzed first.

- **Good Relationship**

Schyns, Maslyn, & Marc (2012:594) have defined a good relationship as the high quality exchange of behaviour between the one in authority and her/his followers; the mutual dealings, connections or feelings that exist between two parties, countries, people, etc. This type of relationship is called “amity” or “comity,” referring to a friendship or harmony between individuals or groups.

Almost half of the women interviewed responded that there is a good relationship. Among them, here are some of their responses that I thought were worth sharing. It is interesting to discover that even among those who have responded by saying the relationship is good, the basis for their argument differs. Some base their argument on the fact that women have been authorized to form their organization within the church called *Chigwirizano cha amai*, where they are free to exercise their gifts, like preaching, singing, charity and social work. They argue that in the absence of a good relationship, such freedom would not have been accorded.

Good relationship based on Chigwirizano cha amai

Here are the comments from those who see this relationship as good through the formulation of *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

1. There is a good relationship because we have our own organization within the church called *Chigwirizano cha amai*. Thus, when the church excommunicates or

disciplines a member of this organization, she is automatically excommunicated from or disciplined by the organization. (C1)

2. There is a good relationship because the church has assigned *amkhalapakati* to work as mediators between the church leadership and our organization, *Chigwirizano cha amai*. Through them our concerns and issues are presented to the session. (C1)

3. I think there is good relationship since we, the members of *Chigwirizano*, are free to do development work in the church, like buying the Holy Communion vessels and attire, building kitchens for the church, etc. (C1)

4. There is a good relationship because our Synod has accepted us to have our own organization which is instrumental in the areas of, for example, welcoming a new minister. Women work day and night at the minister's house for almost a week, cooking for his whole family, until he is inducted. Women are the ones who during the funeral stay at the house of the bereaved for almost two days, singing day and night and providing moral support, etc. (C2)

5. There is a good relationship because when we as *Chigwirizano cha amai* have a problem, for example, a short-fall in our budget for the annual conference, we ask the leadership of the church to come to our rescue, and vice versa. (C4)

Good relationship based on women elders and deacons being in leadership

Another view held by some women is that the relationship is good, based on women elders and deacons being in leadership. To them, a good relationship is seen through the eyes of women leadership. Sollmann (2012:1) has defined leadership as a relational activity (and not hierarchical) that aims at facilitating and collaborating across teams, time zones, cultures and disciplines (rather than commanding and controlling).

Sanders (1969:15) is in line with Sollmann by defining Christian leadership in this way:

True leadership is found in giving yourself in service to others, not in coaxing or inducing others to service. True service is never without cost. Often it comes with a painful baptism of suffering. But the true

spiritual leader is focused on the service she/he can render to God and other people, not on the residuals and perks of high office or holy tittle.

Coogan (2003:153) defines a Christian leader as:

One who can demonstrate a balance between personal toughness and pastoral tenderness; he is able to show sensitive compassion to his followers. Compassion might seem to be weak leadership trait to those secular critics who believe that there is no substitute for tough leadership if one desires to be effective.

Summing up the above definitions, Stauffacher (2013:58) suggests that Christian leadership is not about self-serving, but about being a servant to all; it is not about titles or positions, but about self-sacrifice and surrender; and it is not about being a dictator or a coward, but about being a compassionate and tender leader who can stand up for what is right.

After defining what leadership is all about, I now go on to examine the responses from some of the women on what they thought it means when talking about a good relationship between women and church leadership, namely, women in leadership.

1. There is now gender in the church since women are church elders, a decision which was made by the Synod. This means that there are no differences between men and women, except that by nature, biologically, men are powerful and women ought to be submissive. This has an implication when it comes to session⁶² meetings because women have to wait for the reverend and male leaders to contribute first, before they can. (C3)
2. There is a good relationship because unlike during the past, women can now become church elders and deacons. Women are also allowed to preach from the pulpit, as well as enter the vestry. (C3)
3. The Synod has allowed women to take up the leadership roles of eldership and deaconship, but the problem is that the mentality of some of the members has

⁶² A session meeting is more like a council of leaders where they meet to discuss hot issues concerning the church. Some of these meetings are peacefully done and for the betterment of the church; but there have also been instances where there have been some disagreements, either between church elders or between elders and reverends.

not changed, resulting in resistance. Therefore, despite the fact that some women are elders and deacons, when it comes to decision making, some of the male elders find it very hard to accept a decision made by a woman. (C7)

4. There is a good relationship because women are also allowed to go to the pulpit and preach something which was not done before. This should continue so that women can also become reverends in the future. (C8)

Good relationship because they are in majority

It is interesting to note that to some women, the good relationship is based on numbers. The fact that women are in the majority in the church is an indicator that the church leadership treats women well. What follows are some of their contributions.

1. There is a good relationship because women are the majority in the church and are therefore responsible for the welfare of the church, like visiting the sick and the weak; and taking care of the reverend's welfare, especially in the area of his upkeep, i.e. food. (C9)
2. There is a good relationship with the church leadership because three quarters of the church are women. They work together; and the numbers of men are few. Thus, without women the church will fail in many ways. (C9)

Good relationship based on equality before God

Some related the good relationship with the fact that we are all created by God, therefore, we are all equal. They are mainly referring to Galatians 3:26-29, where it says, "... there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". Below are some of their responses:

1. There is a good relationship because we are all equal, we are all the children of God and we all do things together. (C10)
2. As of now there is a good relationship because we all have Jesus Christ and we accredit our relationship to Him. (C10)
3. There is a good relationship since all of us worship the same God. (C12)

4. We are part of God's creation. We are very instrumental both in the society and in the church. (C3)

It is surprising to see that although half of the women responded that there is a good relationship, the results showed that the basis for their argument differed in that the majority referred it to the fact that the church leadership allowed women to have their own organization; seconded by the fact that women are now elders and deacons; followed by the assertion that we are all equal before God; and concluded by the reality that women are in the majority.

The researcher was also surprised to discover that for those whose argument was based on women being elders and deacons, their responses ended with either a complaint or a request. It was noted that almost all the points had that connotation. For example, one of the interviewee's expressed concern that although women are elders and deacons, the men are naturally more powerful and therefore exercise their power over women during session meetings to such an extent that women have to wait for the male elders and reverends to contribute first before they can. Another contribution raised a concern that despite women taking up leadership roles, when it comes to decision making, men are not ready to accept the decision made by a woman. The final response ends with a request, pleading with the Synod that these women leadership roles should not just end with being an elder and deacon, but the door should also be opened for them to be ordained as reverends.

- **Poor relationship**

The Cambridge Dictionary (2014, para.1)⁶³ defines a 'poor relationship' as "someone or something similar to but less important than another person or thing and that people do not consider equally valuable." In other words, I can say it refers to one that doesn't help you to become a better you; one that deters you from your path (wherever you want to be at in life) as opposed to one that's uplifting, one that encourage both partners to be themselves and more in a positive way.

⁶³ The page number was not given.

The above two definitions of a poor relationship seems to match with what the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* have in mind when they say there is a poor/bad relationship. This is evident in the reasons they narrate. There are many factors which they give for this poor relationship but the few that attracted my attention are as follows:

1. The relationship is poor because so far there are very few areas where the leaders involve us, the rest are being involved by men, for example, preaching. (C5)
2. The only problem is that up till now the Synod has not allowed women to become reverends. We feel we are being oppressed and we are asking the Synod to give women the opportunity to be ordained as reverends. (C5)
3. Up till now there are no woman elders or deacons in my congregation. (C12)
4. There is a problem in our relationship with the church leadership because men consider us women as failures, for example, when it comes to preaching men do not believe that women can be as powerful preachers as they are. They therefore oppress us. (C12)
5. The relationship is not good. I am saying this because of what happened to my church. When the Synod decided on the leadership of women in the areas of church elders and deaconess; first of all the reverend did not announce it in the church. When we saw our neighboring congregations having women leaders, we asked the reverend and church elders why our congregation does not have women leaders. The church leadership tried to resist but women and some men fought hard through prayers and deliberations and now we have few women leaders.
6. The relationship is not good. Let me narrate to you what happened at my church; even though the Synod accepted women to become leaders, but my reverend and church elders openly resisted the decision. They even went to the media where they announced their stand of against women leadership. Up to now there is no any woman church elder or a deaconess.
7. Our relationship is bad especially when it comes to decision making. For example, with the calling of the new reverend, women are not consulted. They

decide who to call, leaving women just to receive the end result. But when the reverend comes they will ask the same women whom they ignored in the decision making to take the leading role of cooking for the family of the reverend up to his induction day. Thereafter, they will ask the same women to do monthly visits with some groceries. (C12)

All of the above factors are in one way or the other addressing the same issue, namely, the absence of women in leadership roles. The fact that there are no woman reverends in the Synod up till now shows that women have been discriminated in church issues and activities. For example issues such as the pulpit being dominated by men only with very few exceptions of women. This is exactly what is addressed in the book titled, “Men on the pulpit, women in the pews,” by Hendricks, Mouton, Hansen & Roux (2012:71-78), where they narrate how African women have been excluded from religious studies. By excluding women from religious studies is a smart way of keeping men at the pulpit and women in the pews, for there is no way a woman can ascend to the pulpit without having some background in biblical studies. In the previous chapter, a theory on social identity was formulated with aspects of self-categorization and stereotyping. Here, the research results prove how these two aspects are active in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod; where two categories have been formed, that of men being justified to become reverends; and women being excluded from this role. Issues such as women being considered failures or as being weak portrays a picture that the church has not yet seen a vibrant woman leading the church, either at the eldership or ministerial position.

- **Good and poor relationship**

It seems rather awkward for some respondents to reply by saying that the relationship is both good and poor. But it makes more sense when you start listening to their arguments. In fact, what they are articulating is this: It is hard to determine the relationship of women and church leadership because currently, as far as the Synod is concerned, it depends on the particular reverend and elders in a specific congregation at that time. For example, if you have a reverend and elders who are in favour of women leadership, then women will be allowed to participate in preaching, and become elders and deacons. This means that at that particular time and in that

particular congregation the answer to the question will be, ‘there is a good relationship’.

It is also true, that if another reverend and a different calibre of elders come to the same congregation, things will totally change; this new group of leadership will also have their own perception of looking at the issue of women leadership⁶⁴.

This means that at this particular time, neither will women be allowed to preach, nor take up leadership roles. It is also hard to determine the relationship because it depends on the issue being addressed at that particular time. For example, anything to do with women ministry, like *Chigwirizano cha amai*, there is an understanding and supportive response; but anything to do with women leadership leads to dissention. In this case, the point of a good relationship is classified into two sub-groups, namely: (1) Good and poor relationship based on the current leadership; and (2) Good and poor relationships based on women’s roles. Following, are the responses from the respondents:

Good and poor relationship based on the current leadership

This means that the determining factor of good or poor relationships is based on the type of leaders the congregation has at that particular time. Following, are the responses from the respondents:

1. Our relationship is sometimes good and sometimes poor. There are some leaders who are cooperative; while others are aggressive. (C11)
2. The relationship is mainly based on the type of reverend you have at that time. If the pastor is not born again then a poor relationship develops. But if he is born again, then he involves women in the leadership of the church. He is the

⁶⁴ Nkhoma Synod has a calling system for ministers. This means that a minister is allowed to stay at one congregation for a minimum of three years. It is only after three years that a minister is allowed to move from one congregation to another, but this movement is usually based on being called by another congregation, otherwise the minister is to remain at the same congregation. Besides this normal way of transferring, there are two other ways: 1. Thus, when you have been appointed by the Synod to take up duties, like that of General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary, heading Synod departments like education, HIV/AIDS, relief and development, church and society, youth, missions, printing, chaplaincy, lecturing at the theological institutions like Zomba and Josophat Mwale and etc. 2. Thus, when there is a poor relationship between the minister and the congregation. So it either the minister asking to be transformed or the congregation asking the minister to move out.

one to enlighten men who are against women leadership, for example, in Acts 2:17 the Bible does not say ‘men or women’ but it says, “On the flesh,” which means it is either a woman or a man. Women can also take up leadership roles because Christianity has nothing to do with being a man or woman. (C11)

3. If a pastor brings good news about women leadership then the church follows; but if he brings false messages against women leadership then the church again ignorantly grasps his message, leading elders to fight against women leadership. (C11)
4. I cannot say the relationship is good or bad but it is either way because the determining factor is the type of the reverend and church leadership. Let me tell you a story that happened in my congregation; when our church was led by reverend X⁶⁵ we had women leaders but when he was transferred his predecessor openly declared to stop women leadership because it is against the Bible. (C12)

Good and poor relationship based on women’s roles

The determining factor in this case are the duties of women in the church. Any role that is not revolving around leadership, gains good and smooth conversation; but anything that has to do with leadership roles, leads to conflict. Here are the responses:

1. The relationship is only good when it comes to any issue, except the issue of women leadership. They think it is a cultural taboo for a woman elder to go together on church visits with a male elder who is not their husband, or vice versa. (C7)

⁶⁵ For ethical reasons the interviewee preferred not to mention the name of the reverend directly but to identify him as reverend X.

2. There is a good relationship but when it comes to reporting women issues to the session, then women are not permitted; our decisions has to go through *amkhalapakati*. (C7)
3. There is good and smooth conversation as long as the roles do not involve leadership; but once it involves leadership, then the conversation becomes bitter and sour. (C9)

So far, we have seen the responses from members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* pertaining to their relationship with the church leadership. I see that the way the CCAP Nkhoma Synod defines the term leadership is different from the definitions given by Sollmann, Sanders and Michael. I also perceive these differences to be the cause of the tension that exists between the women and church leadership.

The fact that many reverends and elders define the term ‘leadership’ as a hierarchical activity that aims at commanding and controlling (Kathryn, 2012), or coaxing and inducing others to serve (Sanders, 1969:15), has led to a situation where women have been victimized because men do not want to be commanded and controlled by women. If they had defined leadership as offering a service to others and not self-service, I believe their approach to women leadership would have been different. So men are fighting against the power and control which they think women will have if they attain leadership positions.

• Conclusion

By just partially going through the responses of these women with regards to their relationship with the leadership, one might end up concluding wrongly that the CCAP Nkhoma Synod has a very good relationship with women in as far as their leadership roles are concerned. But their way of responding has a much deeper meaning which can only be excavated through what Osmer (2008:82-84) calls, “a spirituality of sagely wisdom”. He asserts that a spirituality of sagely wisdom has two ends on a continuum, with thoughtfulness on the one end, and theoretical interpretation on the other end and wise judgment as the focus of the interpretive task.

On this continuum, thoughtfulness is defined as being considerate in the way people treat others or being insightful about matters in everyday life (Osmer, 2008:82). While

theoretical interpretation refers to the ability to draw on theories of the arts and sciences to understand and respond to particular episodes, situations, or contexts (Osmer, 2008:83).

With regards to wise judgment, Osmer (2008:84) refers to it as the capacity to interpret episodes, situations, and contexts in three interrelated ways: (1) recognition of the relevant particulars of specific events and circumstances; (2) discernment of the moral ends at stake; (3) determination of the most effective means to achieve these ends in light of the constraints and possibilities of a particular time and place.

So for one to understand the deeper meaning of the women's responses, it demands these three attributes of thoughtfulness, theological interpretation and wise judgment. After engaging with these attributes, I discovered that all three categories of answers from the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* were addressing one issue; or in other words, all three groups of women were actually saying the same thing, that is, there is no conducive relationship between women and church leadership. The researcher has come up with this interpretation because all the answers, including those which indicated a good relationship, points to an element which directly or indirectly shows that there is still a problem which has to be addressed in order to change this poor relationship. You can see these elements in phrases like, "... there is good relationship because women have their organization, *Chigwirizano cha amai* where they are free to exercise their gifts". Outwardly this answer portrays a wonderful picture of these two groups, but a closer inspection of the historical background of how the *Chigwirizano* was formed, reveals that it was as a result of the reaction against men's domination in which women had no opportunity to preach and take up leadership roles. It was therefore suggested to the leadership of the church by the wives of the first missionaries to create a space for women ministry within the church (Phiri, 1997:74).

The suggestion was received by men with grateful hearts, bearing in mind that it was a good and smart way of silencing women from demanding leadership roles and from preaching. Since then whenever the issue of women leadership is introduced, some reverends and elders have referred women to *Chigwirizano cha amai* as a place for them to exercise their godly given gifts. One reverend is quoted as saying, "Women should be satisfied with the work they do in *Chigwirizano cha amai*, that is enough; therefore no need to demand leadership roles." This raises an argument: Was

Chigwirizano cha amai approved by the leadership of the church with the purpose of silencing women from demanding leadership roles? So *Chigwirizano cha amai* has become a device used by reverends and male elders to “positively” discourage women from attaining leadership positions. I have used the word “positively” because of the way in which these men address women. They approach women in such a manner of convincing them that the tasks of *Chigwirizano cha amai* are already more than enough for them; therefore, this should suffice, there is no need to demand leadership roles as well. This “positive” approach has somehow worked out for them because there are some women who believe that *Chigwirizano cha amai* is enough for them.

Another phrase which shows that despite saying there is a good relationship actually means there is no conducive relationship: “... good relationship because of the *amkhalapakati* who are our mediators through whom our concerns, ideas, issues, etc. are represented to the session”.

Honestly speaking if women were fully accepted by the church leadership as elders and deacons, with all the powers (not of controlling and commanding) of leading invested in them, I see no reason for maintaining *amkhalapakati* among them (women) because in actual fact these women already have their fellow women representing them as elders and deacons in the session. If you follow the history of *amkhalapakati*, you will discover that their original intended purpose among women was to represent women in the session, and vice versa, because at that stage there were no women leaders. But now with women elders (that is, if they have really been accepted by the church, not just in person but also in action), the presence of *amkhalapakati* defeats the whole intended purpose. This is not just in person but also in action. For instance, as is seen in the congregations where women are elders and deacons, they are there just by name, like a statue, and not in action in that they are not fully involved in the actual activities as that of a leader. A good example is the previous discussion of the *amkhalapakati*.

The final phrase is: “... the relationship is good but the Synod should also consider ordaining women as reverends”. No matter how good something might be, once the conjunction “but” is inserted, it distorts everything. In this discussion, the conjunction “but” portrays the following meaning, “ in as much as we appreciate the decision of electing women as elders and deacons, there still remains an outstanding and

remarkable role of reverend that we still demand.” The whole essence of woman leadership is defeated or blurred in as long as women are denied being able to attain the position of a reverend.

To sum this section up, the researcher scrutinized the answers that were obtained from the women with regards to the question, “What is the current relationship between women and the church leadership?” In trying to get clarity, these answers were divided into three sub-sections, namely: (1) good relationship; (2) poor relationship; and (3) good and poor relationship. But after inspecting these answers, it was discovered through “a spirituality of sagely wisdom,” that all these women were actually talking about the same thing. This means they all have one answer and not three different answers. This one answer is: “the relationship between women and church leadership is not conducive.”

The following category of respondents to be analysed with regards to the relationship of women and church leadership are the male church elders. As already explained earlier, this group of people in the church are responsible for the decision making. Thus, when we are talking about the relationship of women and church leadership, we are actually referring to them because they are the main components of church leadership; without them, the leadership is incapacitated and incomplete. It is possible for the session to take place without the parish reverend (they ask a reverend of the sister church to share the session⁶⁶); but it is completely impossible for the session to take place in the absence of church elders. In that, there has never ever been such a case where the church has used elders from the sister church, as has been the norm in the case of reverends. However, it is vital to determine their opinion on how they perceive this relationship. Here, we are actually tackling the relationship between women and male elders. Ignoring them from the process of gathering data will lead to an incomplete interpretation, which would be like leaving out an essential component.

⁶⁶ A sister church is more like a partner church but from within the CCAP Nkhoma Synod; and also from within the same presbytery. In most cases, they are congregations who are neighbors. This partner church serves mainly two purposes: (1) when the other congregation does not have a minister, the minister from this partner church carries out all the duties of this other church until another minister has come. (2) When there is a conflict between the elders and the serving minister, the minister from the sister church is the one who mediates between the two; and he is the one who heads the session in such a situation.

2.5.1.5. Male church elders

In this exercise, this group is referred to as E13-E20. Just as the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, this group too contributed their views on how they perceive their relationship with women in the church. This was also coded and organized through the non-cross-sectional data organization system. Thereafter, it was classified into the following sub-topics: (1) Good relationship; (2) Poor relationship; and (3) Good and poor relationship.

- **Good relationship**

After analysing the responses which indicated a good relationship, it was discovered that the basis of their argument was not that different from those of the women. In the same way, their arguments were based on the following areas: (1) the establishment of the Women's Guild; (2) women leadership; (3) equality; and (4) numbers.

Good relationship based on the organization (*Chigwirizano cha amai*)

The fact that they, as decision makers endorsed the establishment of *Chigwirizano cha amai* was pointed out as an indicator of a good relationship with women. Almost more than three quarters of the interviewees mentioned this point in the following statements:

1. There is a good relationship because the voices of the Women's Guild are heard at the session through our presiding *amkhalapakati*, and vice versa. (E13)
2. There is a good relationship because women through their *Chigwirizano cha amai* are able to participate in the life and activities of the church. (E13)
3. Through *Chigwirizano cha amai* women are leading in the development projects of the church. But they should not become leaders because in the Bible, all leadership roles were assigned to men. Roles, like that of the king, prophets, etc. Otherwise, they are very committed in the church, country and in the society. (E14)
4. Women through *Chigwirizano cha amai* are very helpful and supportive, we rely on them. They are also respectful. (E14)

5. At my congregation there is a good relationship. Let me tell you a story which took place last year during the women's annual conference. When women had a short fall in their budget, the session decided to cover up this short fall by giving them the money they wanted. (E13)
6. There is a good relationship because our Synod has entrusted within their organization some of these tasks: overseeing the welfare of the reverend, counselling, cleaning the church and some development projects. (E16)

Good relationship based on the number (they are in the majority)

This second contribution has a good number of supporters but not as many as the preceding one. This is indicated in the following sentences:

1. There is a good relationship because the majority are women, despite the fact that they are denied leadership roles, like being reverends. This is wrong and the Synod has to scrutinize the situation again because in many things it is them who help us. (E16)
2. The majority in the church are women and their impact on the church cannot be overshadowed or ignored. This is as a result of the good relationship fostered by the leadership of the church. (E16)
3. The relationship is good based on the fact that on Sundays a big part of the church is occupied by women, almost twice as many as there are men. The only reservation is their ability to entice men, especially the church elders. (E16)

Good relationship based on equality before God

This was another contribution made by some church elders. Below are their statements:

1. There is a good relationship because we all worship the same God and we do not chase women away from the church service. (E17)
2. Women are part of the creation just as we are and they are very instrumental, not only in the church but also countrywide. By God's design, a human being exists on earth through a woman; but by nature they are weak and need a

helping hand for guidance, but this does not stop them from achieving greater things. (E18)

Good relationship based on women leadership and preaching

Others still base the good relationship on the current position where in some congregations women are preaching and are elected as elders and deacons. This is according to the following statements:

1. It is good because qualified women are preaching and are being elected as elders and deacons. (E13)
2. At the moment, there is a slight change for the better because women are now being allowed to preach on Wednesdays, something which was not done in the past. (E15)
3. We have women leaders in our church now, the only problem is that they are slow in doing things. Sometimes they ignore church duties because of other engagements at home. All they need is ample time for training because women leadership is a new phenomenon in our Synod. (E16)
4. Women are very instrumental in the church; but out of every 100 women, only 2 or 3 qualify to become leaders. Unfortunately, even these few are shy to contribute during the session due to their submissive attitude. (E19)

It is amazing to realize that although both members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* and male church elders indicated a good relationship, also bearing the same sub-topics; but if you try to analyse the tone of their statements, one is able through the spirituality of sagely wisdom (Osmer, 2008:82-84) to see the difference. There are some cases⁶⁷ where (although the answer is the same from both parties) the tone is high, loud and vibrant; while in others, it is low and dragging. For example, in the case where both men and women say there is good relationship based on the fact of the establishment

⁶⁷ As I listened to the recordings during the time I was transcribing the data I observed that men were speaking with jovial voices implying that since women have *Chigwirizano cha amai*, what else do they want? In the case of women, in as much as they acknowledged the establishment of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, they would have loved to also be considered for leadership roles.

of the Women's Guild. In this case, the statements of men were high, loud and vibrant; while those of the women were low and dragging.

Behind the high, loud and vibrant tone of the men, you could hear men rejoicing and celebrating over the establishment of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, because a group has now been devised for shattering or deterring women from demanding leadership roles. Women were in this case treated and handled as children, in that, when a child gives you a tough time on a certain issue, a parent will usually improvise by offering her/him something attractive to keep her/him busy and occupied.

In this case, *Chigwirizano cha amai* was in one way accepted to keep women busy and stop troubling the leadership of the church with their demands of women leadership. Hence, the creation of a high, loud and vibrant tone; telling them, here is *Chigwirizano cha amai*, be satisfied with what you are doing and stop demanding the leadership roles of men.

Behind the low and dragging statements of women one can see that although they appreciate the establishment of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*, because it is a place where they now have freedom to express their godly gifts (something which they did not have before), they still feel oppressed and stigmatized because now *Chigwirizano cha amai* has become an ideal place for confiding women. They feel they cannot come out of this cocoon and exercise the same godly given gifts outside the organization. It is as if they were predestined to serve God only in *Chigwirizano cha amai*. To them they ask, does Acts 1:8 only apply to men and not to us when Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." In this case, their Jerusalem is their homes, Judea is their *Chigwirizano cha amai*, Samaria is their congregations; and to the ends of the earth is anywhere outside their church. So in as much as they are thankful for *Chigwirizano cha amai* and are proud of it; they also understand that it is not the means to the end. Instead, they view *Chigwirizano cha amai* as a practical ground where they learn how to preach and how to be a leader, so that after they are equipped they will be able to preach at Sunday services from the pulpit. Also, so that they should be elected as elders and deacons of the church; they should be trained and ordained as reverends, the list goes on and on, but the issue at

hand is: *Chigwirizano cha amai* should not be a place for confiding women with the purpose of shutting them up from making demands for leadership roles.

Another example where we see different tones from the statements, regardless of having the same answer, is on the good relationship, based on the leadership of women as elders and deacons. In this case, the tones have now changed.

The tone of women is high, loud and vibrant; while that of men is low and dragging. Behind the statements of women one can see a face that is shining, rejoicing, jumping up and down. That at long last they are now (or their fellow members of the same sex) ordained as elders and deacons; something they have struggled to achieve for decades. But the men, in as much as they accept this change, locally and generally said, “*chinthuchi ncha chilendo*,”⁶⁸ they still have some reservations. If you critically analyse their statements you will soon discover that in almost each point they try to raise an issue or argument. For example, one point reads, “We have now women leaders in our church, the only problem is that they are slow in doing things.” Another example reads, “The relationship is good ..., the only reservation is their ability to entice/weaken men especially we church elders.” This is what I call “stereotyping”. Heatherton et al. (2000:95) has defined stereotyping as, “Descriptions of groups, though faulty, incomplete and overly rigid, that extends to group members”. These are generalizations about people based on category membership (Hogg and Abrams, 1988:65). In this case, what these church elders are doing is trying to attach derogatory stereotypes to *Chigwirizano cha amai* (out-groups) and favourable ones to themselves (in-groups).

It is just unfortunate that these types of stereotypes are directed toward women, as if there has never ever been a case in the CCAP Nkhoma where male church elders have been either disciplined by, or excommunicated from the church, under the same allegations they are accusing the women of. But even within such a scenario, the church of God has never stopped, it continues to grow; all that the church does is elect

⁶⁸ This is a very common saying among the reverends and elders of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, referring to any new change that takes place in the Synod. This connotation is mainly used in a negative way, implying that they are not for it.

another elder to replace the disciplined or excommunicated one. Why then should it be such a contentious issue and debate when it comes to women?

In as much as I cannot completely deny their allegations against women,⁶⁹ I still argue that this shouldn't be the reason for deterring women from leadership roles. Why can't they apply the same rules they give to men when they are convicted? After all, is it only women who entice men, and not vice versa as well? This section was on the answers of church elders that there is good relationship. Let us now see those who are saying the relationship is poor.

- **Poor relationship**

Another group of male church elders argued that the relationship is poor, based on the following statement:

1. What did God say? Not myself or my uncle! He said it is not good for man to be alone. What is it now that stops women from taking up leadership roles? Just imagine, in the session, there are no women, only men; this is not good. If women cannot become leaders, then they might as well not come to church; it should be only men who are strong and important. (E20)

It is remarkable to see that out of eight focus groups of church elders, there was only one group which indicated a poor relationship. There is more to it than what appears on the surface. There are numerous messages behind the silence of acknowledging the poor relationship. One of these messages is that the absence of women in leadership positions is not acknowledged by them as an indicator of a poor relationship between women and church leadership. With this situation, one is able to see a conflict of interest.

Women see their absence in leadership positions as an indication of a poor relationship; while the decision makers (elders) do not see it as a problem. With this

⁶⁹ There have been indeed cases where women have been found guilty, for example, of adultery; but my argument is that this should not be an excuse for stopping women from ascending to leadership positions, as if there has never been any man found guilty of adultery.

difference, it becomes very hard to solve the problem at hand, especially when those holding the keys do not even see a problem.

- **Good and poor relationship**

This is the third category of responses from church elders. It has one sub-topic with its statements below:

Good and poor relationship based on women's roles

The following are the statements:

1. We have a very good relationship with women in as far as it involves other issues and activities but not women leadership because they are weak; they do not contribute; and are not comfortable. So in order to give them respect, it is not good for them to become elders and deacons, they should be busy with the activities of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*. (E18)
2. Women are a blessing to us men; they are there to help us in various ways but not with church leadership roles because they are already engaged in other activities at home. Most of the women who are leaders rely heavily on men, for example, women chiefs; they rely on their uncles or brothers. Very few women are successful. Even in the church, women leaders are weak and sometimes they don't even finish their term of office. This is a clear indication that she is meant for home management, and not church leadership. (E18)

The most interesting aspect, as I try to compare men's arguments with those of women on the same category of poor relationship is the discovery that women had two sub-topics under this category, namely: (1) Good and poor relationship based on women's roles; and (2) Good and poor relationship based on the current relationship.

As for men, there is only one sub-topic, namely, there is a good and poor relationship based on women's roles.

The disappearing of the second sub-topic with the men reveals something quite notable, which these elders tried to hide by escaping the point. Male elders, being at

the centre of decision making are well informed and are also aware at the same time that the life and death of any decision in the church lies in their hands. They can either decide to empower women through leadership roles; or disempower them by hindering them from attaining leadership roles. In other words, by failing to accept the ruling powers they have in determining the relationship between women and themselves, they are actually admitting that they are at the centre of this controversy.

- **Conclusion**

Going through the responses of the male church elders with regards to the question of the relationship between women and the church leadership, it shows there are more problems with this relationship than one can anticipate. For instance, discovering the high, loud, and vibrant tones over the formation of *Chigwirizano cha amai*; and the low and dragging tone over the decision of women becoming elders; discovering that there was only one group of elders accepting that there is a poor relationship between them and the women; and the disappearing of the second sub-topic, clearly shows that the battle for women leadership is still there.

The last set of respondents to be analysed for this section in relation to the relationship between women and church leadership are reverends of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Their contributions will enhance the credibility and authenticity of the collected data because they play a vital and crucial role in the church; that of a paternal pastor who advises their members. Therefore, the following section represents their findings.

2.5.1.6.Reverends

The reverends, identified as R21-R25, also contributed towards what they believe to be the current relationship between women and the church leadership. Just as with the previous two groups of women and elders, their responses were first of all coded and organized through the non-cross-sectional organization system; and then organized into the following topics: (1) good relationship; (2) poor relationship; and (3) good and poor relationship.

- **Good relationship**

The following statement characterizes the good relationship between women and men and is based on the fact that there is *Chigwirizano cha amai* within the church which use *amkhalapakati* to mediate between women and the session.

1. There is a good relationship because women are able to voice their concerns and issues to the leadership of the church through the chosen *amkhalapakati*. (R21)
2. The church accepted that women should have *Chigwirizano cha amai*, this clarifies that the relationship is good. (R23)

- **Poor relationship**

In this section, I had three responses whose contributions are as follows:

1. It is still a challenge in the church because our Synod considers the leadership of the church to be the men's responsibility, unlike in the other Synods of Livingstonia and Blantyre, but also in Pentecostal churches where women are ordained as elders and reverends. (R22)
2. The relationship is not good because we consider women to be weak; and therefore cannot effectively contribute to the welfare of the church. (R24)
3. It is not good because women are not preaching. (R23)

- **Good and poor relationship**

The following response is from those who view the relationship as being either poor or good, depending on the situation at that particular time.

1. The relationship as of now in the Nkhoma Synod is not straight forward because there are some congregations that have women elders and deacons; while others do not have. There is a need for the Synod to discuss and agree on one thing, either for women or against women leaders. We need to engage in the Bible to give us the direction on this issue. (R25)

To summarize the responses from the reverends, it is interesting to see that the group which said the relationship is good, the basis for their view was like that of the elders,

who referred it to the establishment of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*. To this group, it is a clear indication that having women as elders and deacons is not something they can be proud of and accredited it to a symbol of a good relationship between women and church leaders. As for those who said it is poor, much of their argument was based on the fact that women are still missing from leadership positions. This means to them, the presence of women in leadership roles, more especially the ordination of women as reverends, will be a clear indication that the church leadership has a good relationship to the extent of accepting women as people, gifted by God to lead the church. Still, some said that the relationship is not good because they consider women to be weak and therefore not fit for church activities. This I think is a misinterpretation of 1 Peter 3:7, because there the author continues to say that women are heirs with men of the gracious gift of life. It has nothing to do with stopping them from becoming leaders. Finally, the last group of both good and poor relationship, did not really grasp what was going on in the Synod, since in some congregations there are women elders; and in others, they are not allowed. The only predicament with this group was their failure to explain what they meant by saying good or poor.

- **Conclusion**

After going through the question which was inquiring about the current relationship between women and church leadership, the answers from the three groups, namely, the women, church elders and reverends, unveiled their different views on how they perceive this issue. I discovered through the spirituality of sagely wisdom (Osmer, 2008:82-84) that despite the fact that some groups of women said it is good; with some arguing it is poor; and still others believing it is the combination of the two. In fact, what all of them are implying is that there is a poor relationship.

As for the male church elders, the majority were of the view that there is good relationship because the church leadership has given women the freedom to exercise their godly given gifts in the *Chigwirizano cha amai* organization. It is surprising to see that the church leadership has been acknowledged as having given women the freedom to exercise their godly given gifts; and not the Bible or God. The final group of reverends accepted the poor relationship of women and church leadership but on the account of some congregations having women elders; while others do not.

5.2.2. Analysing the effect of the preaching of the first missionaries on women

This second section of the empirical data is specifically focused on analysing the interpretations from the respondents on the first missionaries' message; and how it has affected the treatment of women in the church, as far as their leadership roles are concerned. The research question was: **We are talking about how women are being treated in the church community. Please tell me a story of what you know of how the first missionaries presented the gospel and the effect it has on the treatment of women today. Please give some examples.**

This question is a vital aspect of this research because chapter one and two clearly indicated that before the coming of these missionaries, people in the Central Region had no idea of Christianity. This means that the arrival of the missionaries introduced a religion which did not exist in this region before. So whatever they preached, laid the foundation upon which future generations built. Therefore, whatever they planted through the preaching of their message was crucial to the initial converts because they believed and grasped everything as inerrant. So by hearing from the respondents the stories of how the first missionaries presented the gospel, with regards to the relationship to women, we will be able to see if these first missionaries accommodated women in leadership roles, or not. It is unrealistic and unfair to evaluate the current relationship of women and the leadership of the church without connecting it first with the way the first missionaries presented Christianity to the indigenous people.

The answers to the questions above were interpreted and analysed based on the background discussed in chapters one and two. The collected data was coded and organized through the non-cross-sectional organization data. Then, it was classified into two sub-topics, namely: (1) Patriarchal; (2) Women inclusive. There were still three groups of respondents: (1) Members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*; (2) Male church elders; (3) Reverends.

The first group to be analysed were the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*. This group plays a crucial role because this research revolves around them; therefore, their contributions on this question make it more valuable and credible.

2.5.1.7. *Members of Chigwirizano cha amai*

The first sub-topic to be represented by this first group of *Chigwirizano cha amai* is patriarchal, which is described in the following statements:

- **Patriarchal**

Before going into the actual presentation of these interviewee's responses, here are some definitions of the term, 'patriarchy'. Rich (1976:40) has defined it as:

The power of the fathers; a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male----. Rich (1976:40) says that under patriarchy women's status or situation; her derived economic class or sexual preference is under the power of the fathers, and have access only to so much of privilege or influence as the patriarchy is willing to accede to her, and only for so long as she will pay the price for the male approval.

Ackermann (1995:84) asserts that the word 'patriarchy' is derived from the Greek, 'patriarchs,' meaning 'head of the tribe'. The original patriarchs were the tribal heads referred to in the Old Testament. Later, the term described certain of the most eminent bishops within the Christian church including the Pope. In the late 1960's, the term was broadly defined as, "rule by men".

Walby (1986:51) defines patriarchy as, "A system of interrelated social structures through which men exploit women". The definition refers to a system of social relations rather than individuals, since it is presumed that it is at the level of a social system that gender relations may be explained, not that of individual men, nor that of discrete social institutions.⁷⁰

After explaining the various definitions of patriarchy, I now move on to the responses of the women to see if their expressions of patriarchy reflect these definitions.

⁷⁰ also see Lovejoy (1988:61) in this regard

1. During the time of the first missionaries, neither were women ordained as church elders and deacons; nor were they allowed to preach. (C1)
2. During the missionary era, women were not given a chance in the congregation to be leaders, except during women meetings. (C2)
3. Early missionaries said that women should be quiet according to 1 Corinthians 14:33-34. (C3)
4. During the time of missionaries, women were oppressed; they were not allowed to take up leadership roles. (C4)
5. I believe the way the first missionaries treated women has a big impact on the current relationship between women and the church, in that they saw women as weak vessels. (C5)

The above responses were from members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* who thought the gospel the missionaries brought was more patriarchal or autocratic. The coming section is still on members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*, but their responses were of the view that the gospel was more inclusive of women.

- **Women were included**

By saying that women were included means that the way the first missionaries presented the gospel co-opted and involved women. This is seen in the following responses:

1. When missionaries came, their gospel was for the salvation of both men and women, for they are all equal in the eyes of God. (C10)
2. The first missionaries helped women to serve God without fear because they emphasized the fact that we are God's creation according to the book of Genesis 3. (C11)
3. Missionaries helped with the planting of churches; hence, people were free to hear the Word of God which has helped our spiritual lives. (C6)
4. When missionaries came they opened schools where both girls and boys were educated. They had a vision that in the future women will take up leadership

roles, otherwise they wouldn't have allowed women to go to school to learn how to read or write for education is the key to leadership. (C8)

The preceding responses were from the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*. I now turn to the responses from the male church elders.

2.5.1.8. Male church elders

As already explained earlier on, the contributions from the church elders carries more weight in as far as the system of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is concerned. Their contributions too were first coded and analysed through the non-cross-sectional data organization; and it was thereafter classified into two sub-sections, that of (1) Patriarchal; and (2) Women inclusive.

• Patriarchal

Some of the men's focus groups indicated that the way the first missionaries presented the gospel excluded women. Although they did not audibly and directly say it, their patriarchal way of presenting the gospel indirectly excluded women from leadership. The following statements carry this message and interpretation:

1. The missionaries avoided women from attaining leadership roles, i.e. of being an elder, deacon and reverend; because the Bible says women are weak vessels that need to be helped by men. Therefore, it is better to give them women roles other than those in leadership. (E15)
2. In those days, women were used in the homes for cooking, washing and not in leadership roles. This has affected the current resistance of women leadership in our church. (E16)
3. Missionaries did not involve women in leadership roles because they are weak and are easily taken up by foreign doctrines and teachings. We too don't want them to take up leadership roles. (E17)
4. When the missionaries came they presented the Word of God that women should be silent; therefore, they did not allow them to take up leadership roles. We too do not want them to take up leadership roles. (E13)

5. Missionaries did not encourage women to take up leadership roles. This has resulted to the current problem of denying women from taking up leadership roles. (E14)
6. My grandfather told me a story that none of the first missionaries' wives was a reverend or a church elder. He said most of them were involved in social work and home management. It is not a surprise now that reverend's wives at Yoswa women's school are mainly equipped in the areas of home management like cookery, sowing and the role of a pastor's wife. (E19)

The following section is from the male church elders who saw that the work of the first missionaries was more inclusive of women.

- **Women were included**

The male church elder's support for this sub-heading is demonstrated in the following statements:

1. The gospel preached by our first Dutch missionaries was for all people both men and women; there was no segregation. (E19)
2. We are told that missionaries worked together with their wives and children. They did not leave their wives back home in South Africa, but together they did mission work. (E19)
3. Missionaries held that both men and women should come together and hear the Word of God because all are equal before Him. (E13)
4. Missionaries brought good news which helped us to become born again and be able to have a good relationship with our friends. (E15)
5. They were indeed sent by God to come otherwise our country would have remained in darkness. Their message is still bearing fruit; this is why we have reverends now. (E20)

The last group to give their responses in the second question is that of the reverends.

2.5.1.9.Reverends

Reverends, as stated earlier on are depicted as spiritual fathers, therefore, even in this section their responses will help in the actual interpretation. Their contributions were coded and analysed according to the non-cross-sectional data organization. They also have two sub-sections: (1) Patriarchal; (2) Women inclusive.

- **Patriarchal/Exclusion of women**

Some of the reverends also saw that the way the first missionaries presented the gospel grasped some characteristics of the patriarchal type of system. Below are their responses:

1. The first missionaries didn't include women in leadership roles because the Bible says that women are the weaker vessels. We are just told that their wives were involved in other activities but not as elders and deacons. (R21)
2. Their gospel was not women friendly; it did not recognize women as capable vessels to take up leadership roles. This has affected our system so much because up till now some of us are still holding onto what our spiritual fathers indoctrinated us with. (R22)
3. Missionaries involved women in their activities, except those of leadership, because their first agenda was not women leadership but salvation for all. (R23)
4. Let me tell you what happened during the time of reverend A. Murray and reverend T.C.B. Vlok. There was not any woman leader. These were our spiritual leaders who brought Christianity here in our area. If our missionaries saw it as unbiblical to engage women in leadership roles, why should it be that we should now start ordaining women? (R21)
5. One day I had the opportunity of chatting with one of the old influential retired reverends. Then we started discussing the present situation of our Synod; he vividly shed tears and he mourned for the Synod, in the way some reverends and church elders are encouraging the issue of women leadership. He said things were not like this in the days of Andrew Murray and his colleagues from the Dutch Reformed Church. We are the Dutch, he

emphasized, as he was trying to gather some strength (since he was crying); and therefore we need to preserve the doctrine we inherited from our fore spiritual fathers from Cape Town. (R22)

The coming responses are for those reverends who explained that the way the missionaries presented the gospel was inclusive of women.

- **Inclusive of women**

The first missionaries' presentation of the gospel was not only acknowledged by members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* and the male church elders, but also by the reverends. Below are their acknowledgements:

1. The message of the first missionaries was for both men and women to be saved. (R24)
2. When the missionaries came they found men segregating women but through their preaching men came to realize that the salvation of Jesus Christ is for both men and women. (R21)
3. The gospel accommodated women because it preached about love and forgiveness in a society where women were not regarded as human beings but as property. (R25)

- **Conclusion**

This section described the effect that the way the missionaries presented the gospel had on the current situation of women leadership in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Three quarters of the three groups of the respondents indicated that their way of presenting the gospel has a great effect on how the church is handling women today. After analysing and interpreting the data it showed that these missionaries did not openly preach against women leadership; but the fact that among them there was completely no woman who was accorded with any leadership role clearly sends a message of a patriarchal type of leadership. There is a common saying among preachers in Malawi that says, "Actions speak louder than words". In this case, although missionaries openly did not preach from the pulpit against women leadership; the absence of

women in these leadership positions ‘preached’ such a message. The results of this research is therefore in agreement with the theories stated in chapter one (1.3.3.1) and two (2.1) which mentioned that the missionaries’ way of presenting the gospel was one way which contributed to the destruction of the matrilineal system, since they presented Christianity as a male dominated religion.

It is encouraging to discover from the statements of the respondents that although the missionaries did not include women in leadership positions, there is still something outstanding here, that is worth acknowledging and mentioning. This is the good news of salvation to both men and women. On this issue, there was no gender inequality, which Fenstermaker & West (2013:265) have defined as, “A great variation due to sex or social status; unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender”. It is interesting to note that almost all of the groups which asserted the first missionaries’ way of presenting the gospel as women inclusive attached this inclusiveness not to leadership but to salvation. This means that although the second group of women inclusiveness chose to differ from the first group of patriarchy still they indirectly agree with this first group. The fact that they do not attach or relate their point of women inclusiveness to women leadership means they agree that the way the first missionaries presented the gospel was patriarchal, where women were deterred from acquiring leadership roles. Therefore, in as much as they agree and accept that the gospel preached by these missionaries brought salvation to our Central Region, whose fruit we are now able to see in the form of an established church; still we cannot deny the fact that the absence of women in leadership positions during their time has had a very negative effect on the church today, where women are denied leadership roles.

The next position of data to be evaluated was on the future of women in leadership positions based on the current events taking place in the church.

5.2.3. Analysing the future of women leadership

This is the third category of the empirical data to be analysed. It revolves around the predictions of respondents with regards to the future of women in respect of leadership positions. The research question was: **You have told me a few stories about events that formed your way of thinking about the early teaching of missionaries and about the current relationship between the church and women. Can you tell me**

about current events that are taking place to illustrate where the church is going in terms of women in leadership positions? This question is paramount to this study because after looking at the current relationship between women and the leadership of the church; and then at the effect of how the first missionaries' presented the gospel has had on the current treatment of women leadership, it is crucial at this point to see what is currently taking place in the church with regards to women leadership, as this will help to predict the future for women. The future of women leadership is based on what is taking place now just as the current position of women leadership is affected by what was planted by the first missionaries. The success and downfall of women leadership in the future is rooted in the current events. This question is also vital in that it will help the leadership of the Synod (that is if they are visionary), after collecting the data to see the current position/stand on women leadership; and come up with a means of securing the future for women leadership.

The collected data was coded and analysed through the non-cross-sectional data organization. It was thereafter classified into two sub-topics, namely: (1) Women in leadership positions and preaching; and (2) No women leader and preacher. The first group to be analysed was the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

2.5.1.10. Members of Chigwirizano cha amai

The group from this organization said that there are now women leaders and preachers in the church but the only difference was on the future. Some said there is a bright future for women leaders, even becoming reverends; while others indicated no future for women leaders.

- **Women leaders and preachers**

The first group to be analysed were those who said there are women leaders; and therefore, there is hope for women leadership in the future. The following respondents spoke of women leaders and preachers; therefore, suggesting there is a bright future.

Bright future

The fact that there are women elders and deacons, some focus groups of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* said there is a bright future. Below are their comments:

1. The church has now changed because women are taking up leadership roles and we believe they will also become reverends. We can foresee that. (C1)
2. Women are now allowed to preach from the pulpit and we have the hope that we will in due course become reverends. (C2)
3. There is a bright future for women leadership because the Synod has now given them the access to the leadership roles of eldership and deaconship. (C3)

No future hope for women leadership and preaching

This group, even though they consider that there are currently women elders and deacons, neither see it as a guarantee for the continuation, nor as a foundation for a bright future for women leadership. These are their contributions:

1. Even though women are now elected as elders and deacons, but still the resistance is very high which makes the future of women leadership unrealistic. (8)
2. Women are now allowed to preach from the pulpit during Sunday services and some are even elders and deacons, but this does not have any future because the majority of male elders and reverends are against this decision. (C10)

• No women leaders and preachers

Even under this section, there are two different views: (1) Those who are saying that since there are no women leaders and preachers in their congregations it means there is no hope for women leadership and preaching even in the future because what the church is sowing now it is going to reap (harvest) in due course. (2) Those who are saying, that although there are currently no women leaders there is still hope for women leadership in the future. I will start below with the first group which says there is no hope for women leadership.

No future hope for women leaders and preachers

The following are their contributions:

1. In our church there is no woman leader. Neither do they allow us to preach on a Sunday, I therefore see no hope for women leadership in our church. (C9)

2. The church completely refused women to become elders and deacons on the grounds that a woman elder and a man elder cannot have church visits together. With this mentality, I do not think things will change for the betterment of women leadership. (C10)
3. Although women are in the majority, up till now no one has ascended to any leadership position and I foresee that they will not make it in the future. (C11)

Future hope for women leaders and preachers

This is the group that believes that even though there are no women leaders and preachers, there is still hope for women leadership. Here are their responses:

1. There is completely no woman elder and even a woman deacon in my congregation. All are men, but since women are elected as elders and deacons in other congregations, I believe women will become leaders and preachers. (C12)
2. The fact that women are in the majority in the church, I remain optimistic that the church leadership will have no option in future but to ordain them because their pressure will be too much for them to bear. (C11)

The next group to be discussed is that of the male elders.

2.5.1.11. Male church elders

Their contributions have also been divided into two sub-groups, namely: (1) Women leaders and preachers; (2) No women leaders and preachers.

- **Women leaders and preachers**

Under this sub-heading, there is another division which has been created based on the future of women leadership. There are some who are of the view that based on the present situation concerning women in leadership; it is obvious that more doors will be opened for women in leadership positions. But another group sees no hope.

Bright future for women leadership and preaching

The following responses support the above point:

- (1) With the current situation of women becoming elders and deacons, there is a bright future and we even think that all congregations in the CCAP Nkhoma will allow women leadership. (E13)

No future hope for women leadership and preaching

This group of male leaders assert that the presence of women preaching from the pulpit and being in leadership positions does not guarantee that this will always be the case.

Below are their arguments:

1. There are indeed women elders and deacons in our congregations now but the fact that this issue has been resent to presbyteries for more scrutinizing makes it very hard to continue. (E15)
2. The Synod made a wrong decision of allowing women leaders; the majority are not in agreement and therefore do not see it progressing. (E16)
3. Although we have women leaders and preachers, but I would rather enlighten the Synod to withdraw the decision because it is against the Word of God. (E17)

The following responses are from those who said there are no women leaders and preachers.

- **No women leaders and preachers**

These groups indicated in their responses that there are no women leaders in their congregations. Among them, some concluded that there is no hope for women leadership in the future because there are currently no women in such positions. While others commented that this current situation of no women in leadership is just temporary, things will change and women will take up leadership roles and preach from the pulpit. The first group are those who hold the view of a bright future for women leaders.

Bright future for women leaders and preachers

The following contributions explain more on these declarations:

1. Although we do not currently have women leaders, the church is now considering electing women as leaders. (E19)
2. The current absence of women in leadership roles is not a hopeless situation. As the world is on the forefront with the issue of women empowerment, the church will also follow. (E14)

No future hope for women leaders and preachers

The following responses are in agreement with this:

- (1) The absence of women in leadership roles in my church is in accordance with the Word of God; therefore since God's Word is infallible and inerrant, it means women will never be accepted as leaders. (E20)
- (2) There are currently no women leaders and preachers in my congregation and in my presbytery. This is because we agreed as a presbytery not to give into the demands for women leadership, because this is a secular-driven decision. Church has nothing to do with gender issues. (E18)

After looking at the contributions from members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* and the male church elders; next to be discussed is the group of reverends.

2.5.1.12. Reverends

It is remarkable that the group of reverends were not willing, and were uncomfortable, to share their views on this issue, except one group which only answered one aspect of the question posed, namely, women leaders and preachers.

- **Women leaders and preachers**

This group of reverends has women leaders in their congregations but they feel these women will not proceed with their leadership roles. They see no future hope for women leadership and preachers.

Below is their comment:

1. Although there are women leaders in our congregations, this is not good and it has to be terminated because this is a 'gender equality syndrome' which has been activated by democracy. The church is not a place for democracy. (R21)

- **Conclusion**

After going through all the contributions from the respondents, it was observed that in all the congregations where women were allowed to be leaders (with exception of the reverend), members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* expressed excitement over the decision, and optimism with regards to the future. Their hope is that this is just the beginning of greater things – that of women leadership being whole-heartedly accepted; and reaching the goal of becoming reverends. The opposite is true with the male side (both elders and reverends) that were very passive and pessimistic with the current position of women leadership and preachers, especially the male elders from the rural congregations. Their pessimistic attitude is a clear indicator that they do not want women leadership to continue to another generation.

Another observation worth taking note of is the deliberate silence of the reverends on this issue. It is incredible to realize that they decided to remain silent. Their silence can be interpreted by using the theory of Osmer (2008:82-84) called, ‘the spirituality of sagely wisdom,’ in which the three elements of thoughtfulness, theoretical interpretations and wise judgment are set into action.

Their silence can be interpreted in two ways: (1) They are either for women leadership and preaching, but are afraid of the male church elders to air their views because once it is known, it means they are in danger of deportation from the congregation. These reverends might therefore fall out of favour with the male church elders because some elders (who are against women leadership) would think that they are using their godly given role as a father and a shepherd of the sheep to influence the church through his teaching to support women leadership. So in order to maintain favour with these male elders, some reverends opted to remain silent, so that they are not directly confronted by the male elders, and at the same time secure their position as the reverend of the congregation. (2) Or they are against women leadership and preaching but are afraid of women who are the main bread winners at the church for almost all reverends in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Therefore, by trying to maintain a good relationship with

these women, several reverends (even those in urban areas) remain neutral by abiding by what the session⁷¹ decides.

In summary, most women are optimistic with their future in as far as leadership roles are concerned; while most men are pessimistic with the future of women leadership and preaching, regardless of some women currently preaching, and becoming elders and deacons.

The following section is on finding out if the women of the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod are side-lined in leadership roles or if they are co-opted.

5.2.4. Analysing if women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod are side-lined in leadership roles

This fourth section of the empirical data is specifically focused on analysing if the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is side-lining women in leadership roles. The research question was: **Some of the people in your community are stating that women are being side-lined in leadership roles in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Can you think of a story which happened to you or someone you know to show if this is true or not?** This question is relevant to the study in two ways: (1) It is going to provide insight into people's interpretations of how women are treated by the church leadership – that is, if they are being side-lined or not? So that after realizing this, the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod should listen wisely and diligently and come up with ways of improving the situation. (2) Through this question we will be able to see if the women are being side-lined or not. If they are sidelined, how are they sidelined? So it is a question that is going to show us a more accurate picture of the environment surrounding women in the church.

The collected data was then coded and analysed through the non-cross-sectional data organizational. Thereafter, it was classified into two sub-topics, namely: (1) Women are side-lined; (2) Women are not side-lined. The first group to be analysed was the

⁷¹Sessions are comprised of ruling and retired church elders and deacons who meet at least once in three months to make decisions for the church. They can sometimes have an emergency session pertaining to the situation. It is according to the rules and regulations of the Synod that the session should always be headed by the reverend either of that congregation or from another sister congregation, otherwise any decision made without the reverend will be declared null and void.

members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*. It is vital to hear from the women themselves how they perceive this whole issue; if they are being either side-lined or not. Their feelings will provide first hand information that will be relevant for this study.

2.5.1.13. Members of Chigwirizano cha amai

The first sub-topic to be tackled by these members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* is that women are side-lined. The Macmillan Dictionary (2009, para.2)⁷² has defined the term ‘sidelined’ as to prevent someone from being involved in something that they would normally expect to be involved in. Along the same lines, The Cambridge Dictionary (2014, para.2)⁷³ defines it as, “To stop someone taking an active and important part in something”. After defining the term, let us now see if these definitions are in agreement with what women mean if they say they are sidelined.

- **Women are sidelined**

The following respondents indicated in their responses what it means to be side-lined.

1. It is true that we are sidelined because some reverends stops us form becoming church leaders, like being elders and reverends. (C7)
2. Yes, we are sidelined in our church because they consider us as people without wisdom. (C8)
3. We are side-lined because only men are entitled to taking up leadership roles, and not us. (C9)
4. We are sidelined because we are not allowed to become elders and deacons. Men think we were only created to take care of our families. (C11)
5. Yes, we are sidelined, because up till now no woman in the Nkhoma Synod has been ordained as a reverend. We also want to become reverends like our friends in the Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods. We are oppressed. (C12)
6. It is true that women are sidelined. Let me tell you a story of what happened at my congregation. It was a time of calling a new reverend; we as members

⁷² Page number was not given.

⁷³ Page number was not given.

of *Chigwirizano cha amai* and the whole congregation were asked to pray and fast so that God would provide us with the reverend of His heart but when it came to the actual day of deciding whom to call, none of us women participated in the exercise of decision making. (C7)

- **Women are not sidelined**

The following responses are from those groups who are of the view that women are not sidelined. Under this sub-heading two groups of thought have developed, each holding the same view but developing from different arguments, namely: (1) Women are not sidelined because there are now women leaders and preachers; (2) Women are not sidelined because they are involved in other church activities.

Women leaders and preachers

This argument is based on the fact that there are now women elders, deacons and preachers in the Nkhoma Synod.

1. We are not sidelined because we are taking up leadership roles and we are preaching. (C1)
2. At first we were sidelined but we are now not sidelined because we go to the vestry, we preach and are elders. (C2)
3. It is true that in the past women were sidelined but we are no longer sidelined because some are now church elders and deacons. (C3)
4. It is not true that women are sidelined in Nkhoma synod. Allow me to give you my own story. When the Synod decided on women leadership I was among the very first few women to be ordained as a church elder and I am still a serving church elder. I also have a friend in the *Chigwirizano cha amai* who is a deputy session clerk. (C1)

Women are involved in other church activities

Below is the contribution of those who are saying that women are involved in other church activities.

It is not true that we are sidelined because the church involves us in many church activities, like social work, church development projects and etcetera. (C8)

The following responses are from the male church elders who are sometimes nicknamed, “the church custodians”.

2.5.1.14. Male church elders

As custodians of the church, they also have their side of the story and their narratives are heard in the coming sub-topic.

- **Women are sidelined**

This is just one side of how these male church elders perceive women in the church as is evident through the following contributions:

1. If side-lining has to do with leadership then it is true that women are sidelined because according to our *chilongosoko*⁷⁴ women are not entitled to leadership, they are just our helpers. (E17)
2. It is true that they are sidelined because just like the Roman Catholics we do not allow women to take up leadership roles. (E18)
3. Women are sidelined in the areas of preaching and leadership because according to our liturgy women are called to play a secondary role in everything. (E19)

⁷⁴ Chilongosoko is more like the church liturgy, which the church follows. This liturgy is documented in what is called ‘zolahulira’ which is partly comprised of rules and regulations of the Synod. Since most Christians don’t know what is documented in this liturgy, some male church elders and reverends take advantage of their ignorance to deceive many Christians by saying that church liturgy does not allow women leaders.

- **Women are not sidelined**

Just like some members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*, male church elders too share the same topic, but developing from different arguments. Two of their arguments are similar to those of the women, but the third one is totally different. Their argument is as follows: (1) Women are not sidelined because there are women leaders and preachers; (2) They are involved in other duties; (3) Women are not side-lined because of the definition.

Women leaders and preachers

The basis of this argument is the presence of women leaders and preachers in some congregations of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Below are some responses which support this fact:

- (1) They were truly side-lined at first but now they are involved in preaching and training at Chongoni. (E13)
- (2) Women are not sidelined because they are involved in all areas of the church, for example, eldership and deaconship. I saw with my own eyes a woman preaching. (E14)
- (3) They are not sidelined because of the leadership roles they have attained with the only exception of being a reverend. (E15)

Women are involved in other church activities

The following responses support this category:

- (1) They are not side-lined because they take leading roles in other areas like *Chigwirizano cha amai*; *Mase*⁷⁵committee, choir, social work, etc. (E16)
- (2) The truth is that we do not sideline women because we involve them in other church organizations like the orphan program, church development, etc. (E20)

⁷⁵ Mase is the house where the reverend stays at the church. So in this case, the mase committee is the group set aside deliberately to look into the affairs of the reverend.

Women are not sidelined because this is what the Bible says

The following argument supports the above sub-heading:

1. It is not easy to decide whether women are being sidelined or not because it all depends on how one defines the term 'sideline'. If the absence of women in leadership roles and preaching is defined as sidelining, then it is another thing, otherwise the Bible, and not the Synod or anybody else clearly states that all the 72 disciples, thereafter the 12 disciples, were all men and not women. Women should not be reverends or elders, from Genesis to Revelation there is no woman minister. (E19)

Remaining on the voices of men, the second category is that of reverends, which will be explicated in the following section.

2.5.1.15. Reverends

The final group of respondents whose contributions are also vital to this question is that of the reverends. They are considered to be the fathers of the congregations. Their contributions carry more weight because somehow the treatment of women (whether sidelined or not) reflects the message they preach from the pulpit, if it accommodates women or not. Their responses were coded and analysed. Thereafter, it was classified into the following two sub-topics: (1) Women are sidelined; (2) Women are not sidelined.

- **Women are sidelined**

For those who said women are sidelined, their responses are as follows:

1. It is true that they are sidelined especially in the area of leadership positions. This started with our first missionaries who never recruited women in their leadership positions. (R22)
2. It is unfortunate that some of our leaders sideline women from different leadership positions. I think the time has come for such type of leaders to change their attitudes towards women by accommodating them. (R22)

3. I have a very vivid example where my fellow reverend admonished me to be very careful with *mazelazela*⁷⁶ of ordaining women as leaders of the church because once we start with one woman, next will be vestry full of them. Hence, it will be easy for them to subdue or overpower us. It is therefore wise to not elect them at all. (R23)
4. It is true they are sidelined because there is still a contentious debate as to whether women should take up leadership roles in the Synod. Some congregations have women elders and deacons, while some do not. Women want to be reverends but they are afraid to voice their desires. As a result, up till now there are no women reverends. (R25)

- **Women are not sidelined**

The following responses testify to the point that women are not sidelined. Their argument, unlike those of the members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* and some male church elders is based on the assumption that it is the Word of God. Here are their arguments:

1. It is not true that the CCAP Nkhoma Synod sidelines or oppresses women. The people should accuse God if women are sidelined; He is the One who is wrong, if He has ever been wrong. (R21)
2. Women are not sidelined because so far I have never heard women complaining of being sidelined. But however, if they are sidelined then it is not the Synod but the Word of God. (R24)
3. The CCAP Nkhoma Synod is not side-lining women but it is the Scriptures. All the disciples of Jesus were men; why did He not choose six women and six men? By sidelining women the Synod is just following the footsteps of Jesus. Even after the dismissal of Judas Iscariot, the Bible says, “Let us choose someone among the men,” and not ‘women’. By not giving women leadership roles, it doesn’t mean they are oppressed, they have their own roles. (R21)

⁷⁶ It is a term referring to any strange doctrine that was not there during the time of the first missionaries.

4. I as a reverend am of the view that Nkhoma Synod does not sideline women. Here is my argument: If the basis of your question is on the leadership of women, then it is God and not the Synod sidelining women. I am saying this because it is His Word which says that women should not take up leadership positions; they should remain quiet. (R3)

- **Conclusion**

The focus of this section was on analysing whether women in the church are side-lined or not. The results indicated that most women are saying that they are side-lined. The basis for their argument is two-fold: (1) They are not elected as church leaders. This argument was mainly supported by members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* from the rural areas (and not those from the urban areas). It has been discovered through this research that there is more resistance on women leadership in the rural areas and not from the urban areas, because almost all the women from the rural congregations were of the opinion that they are being sidelined; and almost all the women from the urban congregations indicated that they are not being sidelined, with only one exception, which I will describe shortly. The only factor that tied both rural and urban women together was on the point that they are sidelined because up till now there are no woman reverends. This burning concern was raised by both parties of women. I therefore suggest that this should raise an alarm to the leadership of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod before things get out of hand. They should start thinking of coming up with a more suitable solution.

In the case of men, it is interesting to realize that almost three quarters admitted the side-lining of women; while the remaining one quarter confessed the involvement of women in leadership positions. Just like women, the three quarters of those who said women are sidelined are from the rural areas. The only difference with the women was the basis for their argument.

Both parties accept that women are being sidelined; but the male church elders go one-step further by implicating the *chilongosoko cha* Synod (liturgy) (see 5.4.4.2) to justify their decision. It is fascinating to discover that it is still the men from the urban congregations, just as the women, who said women are not being sidelined based on

the presence of women currently in leadership roles. This indicates that in urban congregations women leadership is not a big issue, as compared to that of rural congregations. It is surprising to see that there is another basis for an argument under the same sub-topic (women are not sidelined) from the male church elders. In this argument, they are saying women are not sidelined because the church involves them in many other activities like social work, church development, and many more. What is noteworthy is that women themselves do not consider this argument to be reasonable enough to argue that they are not sidelined. This means that the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod has to know that as far as women are concerned, their involvement in the church goes beyond singing, and doing charity and development work; it also involves leadership roles i.e. being an elder, deacon and reverend.

With regards to reverends, through the spirituality of sagely wisdom, I was able to discern that they were talking about one thing, and not the two sub-topics of: (1) Women are sidelined; (2) Women are not sidelined. The one thing they contributed is that women are sidelined; they also indicated as a second sub-topic which I consider to be the real reason why women are sidelined. Here, almost all the reverends agreed that women are sidelined, not by the design of the Nkhoma Synod but by God's design who said women should be silent (1 Corinthians 14:33-34) and should not teach (1 Timothy 2: 11-12). By making such statements, reverends are implicating themselves in the centre of this whole controversy regarding women leadership. Being the teachers of the Word of God, reverends hold a very critical position of directing the church of God, in either the right or wrong direction, based on what they teach.

It is therefore crucial at this moment in time for the CCAP Nkhoma Synod to consider having reverends or helping the already existing reverends with the correct interpretation of the Word of God, in order to direct the people whom God has entrusted them with in the right direction.

After having the majority confess to the sidelining of women, it is now vital to check if this has divided the Synod, which will be discussed next.

5.2.5. Analysing if the issue of women leadership has divided the CCAP Nkhoma Synod

This fifth section of the empirical data is specifically focused on analysing whether the issue of women leadership has divided the Synod; and if so, what are the consequences of this? The research question was formulated like this: **Do you think the Nkhoma Synod is divided on the issue of having women in the position of leadership? If so, why do you think this is the case and how would you describe your own position? Can you tell a story to motivate why you choose this position?**

This question is relevant to this study because it will provide insight on how the issue of women leadership is perceived among its Christians; and whether all members are advocating it, or some still resisting it. More important is the answer to this question in that it will act as a guiding point to solving this problem of women leadership. It is always difficult to deal with any problem if the root cause is not known and addressed. I believe that after identifying the root cause of this division, that is, if the answer will be “there is division,” it will be easier for the researcher to suggest some resolutions to the Synod.

The data which was collected was coded and analysed. Then categories were divided into two sub-groups: (1) The divided Nkhoma Synod; (2) The united Nkhoma Synod. The first group to be analysed is that of *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

2.5.1.16. Members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*

The first sub-topic to be discussed is on the Nkhoma Synod being divided.

The Free Dictionary (2013, para.2)⁷⁷ has defined ‘division’ as, “The act or process of dividing or the state of having been divided. It is the physical separation and regrouping of members of a church according to their stand on an issue that was put to vote”. According to the Merriam Dictionary (2013)⁷⁸, ‘division’ is “The condition or an instance of being divided in opinion or interest; a disagreement or disunity”.

⁷⁷ Page number was not given.

⁷⁸ Page number was not given.

- **The divided Nkhoma Synod**

The following responses describe how the Nkhoma Synod is divided according to the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

1. The Synod is divided because some congregations have women leaders; while others do not have. (C1)
2. Yes, it is divided because there are some elders and reverends that are not in support of women leadership. (C2)
3. The Synod is divided on the issue of women leadership because of the way missionaries first presented the gospel. (C3)
4. Yes, there is a division on this subject because there are some leaders who refuse to accept women in leadership positions; while others support it. (C4)
5. Nkhoma Synod is divided on the women leadership issue because in some congregations women are ordained as elders and deacons; while in other congregations women are silenced. (C5)
6. There is a division in our Synod in as far as the issue of women leadership is concerned. I observed this division during the main women's guild conference at Chongoni. Among the questions which were tabled was: should the leadership of women continue or not? The answers from the women indicated mixed reaction in that some were for women leadership while some were against it. (C2)

- **The united Nkhoma Synod**

Not all the groups of women supported the idea that the Synod is divided; for some, the Nkhoma Synod is united. Below is their opinion:

1. The Synod per say is not divided; it is the people themselves who are divided. (C12)

2.5.1.17. Male church elders

Being the decision makers and custodians of the church, it is important to hear how they view the Synod in which they are a part of the leadership. Are they leading a divided or united Synod? Their views only have one sub-topic, that of acknowledging the division of the Synod.

- **The divided Nkhoma Synod**

The following contributions are from male church elders who confessed to the division in the Synod in as far as women leadership is concerned.

1. Yes, it is divided because there are some congregations who are ordaining women as leaders. (E14)
2. The Synod is divided because some of the congregations of the Nkhoma Synod are imitating the Pentecostals, who allow women leadership. (E15)
3. There is division because we are told that in some congregations women are elders and deacons, something which is a myth here in my congregation. (E18)
4. It is true that the Synod is divided on this issue because we have women elders and deacons in my church; but my neighbour congregation is strict when it comes to women. (E20)
5. It is true that my Synod is divided, I am a living story. As a church elder I last year witnessed a hot debate during the session on whether our congregation should have women leaders, to the extent that some said they will quit the church once the church agrees to start ordaining women. (E15)
6. It is true that our Synod is divided. Let me tell you a story which took place among the reverends this year. When some reverends discovered that some congregations, especially in urban areas, were still ordaining women as church elders and deacons even after a stop order given during last years' synodical meeting, they decided to write a pastoral letter in which among other concerns was the concern of women leadership – that it should stop. (E18)

The issue of division in the Nkhoma Synod will be concluded by taking a look at the contributions from the reverends. This will be discussed next.

2.5.1.18. Reverends

It will be very unrealistic and unfair to conclude the current issue without considering the responses from the ones who are considered to be the fathers of the church. As ministers in charge of the congregations, reverends stand a better chance of knowing the status of the church as to whether it is divided or not, with regards to the issue of women leadership. Their opinions have been divided into two sub-groups: (1) The divided Nkhoma Synod; (2) The united Nkhoma Synod.

- **The divided Nkhoma Synod**

The following responses are in agreement with the Synod being divided:

1. Yes, as of now the Nkhoma Synod is divided because in some congregations women are elected; while in others they are not. (R22)
2. There is division because some reverends are challenging women leadership in their congregations saying that it is unbiblical; while at the same time some reverends are electing women in their congregations as leaders. (R23)
3. Western knowledge has divided our Synod because some congregations in town are electing women as leaders supporting the topic of gender equality, something we will not tolerate. (R24)
4. The Synod is indeed divided because some churches accommodate women leadership; while others do not. This division is the result of the way some leaders interpret 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-34. (R25)
5. There is a division because some reverends are openly challenging women leadership in their congregations; while others (reverends) are encouraging women leadership. (R25)

- **The united Nkhoma Synod**

Below are the points that suggest a united Synod:

1. There is no division in the Synod, except with regards to the difference of interest. Some are interested with women ordination; while others are not interested. (R21)
2. The Synod is not divided at all; they have just not yet had enough time to discuss this issue. This has resulted in ministers or church elders deciding on the issue of women leadership on his own understanding and applying that understanding to his congregation. (R22)

- **Conclusion**

The results of the research have shown that the majority of the respondents, both women and men, in both rural and urban areas, are all in agreement that there is a division that has occurred as a result of the women-leadership issue. This division is evident in some congregations in the urban areas where there are women elders and deacons; while in other congregations still within the Nkhoma Synod, there is not even a single deacon. This is a clear division and confirms how the Merriam Dictionary (2013) has defined the term as a condition or instance of being divided in opinion or interest. In this case, even those reverends and the one group of women who indicated that the Nkhoma Synod is united, are indirectly acknowledging the division.

For example, the one who said, “There is no division ... except the difference of interest,” is actually acknowledging the division because according to the Merriam Dictionary, this difference of interest is that which is called, ‘division’. As for the women who said, “the Synod is not divided but the people,” they too are acknowledging the division because the Synod does not exist in a vacuum, it is comprised of people. The people are the ones who make up the Synod; if there are no people, the Synod will cease to exist.

Other factors worth summarizing here are the reasons attached to their arguments. Three reasons stand out vividly: (1) The first reason has to do with biblical interpretation, in that the majority said the division is a result of some biblical texts, like 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. (2) Secondly, some accorded the division to the first missionaries who in their ministry completely ignored women leadership. (3) Thirdly, there were some who implicated or blamed this division on the Western influence of gender equality. From the collected data it is therefore confirmed that there is division

in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, which has occurred as a result of the issue of women leadership. It is incredible to see how the research results have supported the literature review in 1.3.3.3; 2.1; and 4.1.1. In these sections, it was said that the way the first missionaries presented the gospel and also the way some of the Bible texts (like 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12) were interpreted, have contributed to the current issue concerning women leadership. After conducting the research, the results support what was read in the literature review.

After looking at how the first missionaries and biblical interpretation has affected the current treatment of women in the church, to the extent that it has divided the whole Synod; it is also vital to take into consideration the culture from which the missionaries came and where the Christians spent most of their time. Therefore, the coming section will specifically look at how culture affects the understanding of the roles of women and girls.

5.2.6. Analysing how the context (culture) affects the understanding of the roles of women and girls

This section specifically focused on analysing the context in which the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is situated; with the purpose of finding out if it affects the understanding of the roles of women and girls. The research question is: **How do you think the context (at home, school and in your community) affects your understanding of the role of women and girls?** The relevance of this question lies in the light it will shed on the influence that the context has on the way people understand the role of women and girls. Understanding the context from which the members of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod come forms an essential component, for it is only by gaining such an understanding that one is able to properly interpret the behaviours, actions, beliefs and attitudes of the people involved, otherwise the conclusion reached will be based on the wrong interpretations.

The collected data was then coded and analysed and finally classified into three classes, namely: (1) Roles; (2) Toys; (3) Figurative speech. The leading group to analyse these three aspects of context (culture) is that of *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

2.5.1.19. *Members of Chigwirizano cha amai*

This group cannot be side-lined since it also forms part of the context. A context without women is a deformed context; therefore, their contributions are worth sharing through the three classes.

- **Roles**

Roles are just one of the three classes through which the context affects how women and girls are understood. Below, are expressions from women on how the roles affect their understanding:

1. In the community it is a woman's duty to work hard in order to make sure that the family is well fed and well taken care of. (C4)
2. In the community, it is women who are hard workers; they go to the garden, cook for the family, and take care of the children; while men are just playing drafts or resting. (C5)
3. Children grow up in a context where boys do different tasks to the girls. Boys are taught to cut trees, slash grass; while girls are given jobs like cooking, sweeping, fetching water, etc. (C6)
4. The way we give jobs to our children at home has affected the way we understand. We give boys tasks that demand a lot of energy; and those that are less demanding, are given to the girls. (C7)
5. Women do their chores at home like cooking, fetching firewood, washing and caring for the children. (C8)

- **Toys/Games**

A toy can be any item that can be used for play. Toys are generally used by children and pets; playing with toys is an enjoyable means of training the child in the society. The following contributions from members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* is in accord with the above description of toys:

1. When a child is growing up, parents, friends and relatives buy toys according to the sex of the child. If she is a baby girl they would buy a baby toy with a

small plate and spoon for feeding the baby; as for the boy, they will buy him a toy car, gun and many more. (C1)

2. Upon the birth of the baby, relatives and friends would first ask the sex of the baby before actually buying any clothes. A baby girl will be dressed in pink; and a baby boy in blue. (C2)
3. Girls are meant for home management, therefore, it is necessary to prepare them in advance by buying toys, materials, etc., which predicts what the future will be like. (C3)

- **Figurative speech**

Cohen (1975:669) defines figurative speech as, “A metaphor that is incompletely understood or partly understood”. It is the use of a word or phrase, which transcends its literal interpretation). With this definition of ‘figurative speech’, let us now see the women’s responses which correspond with these definitions.

1. Girls are failures; boys are successful. (C9)
2. Boys are bright and sharp; girls are dull and passive. (C10)
3. Men in the home belittle women, so they do in the same way at the church. (C11)

Next, are the contributions from the male church elders.

2.5.1.20. Male church elders

It is noteworthy that some of these elders are also holding key positions in society, for example, chiefs, political leaders, members of parliament, etc. This means that they are both the custodians of the church; and the custodians of society. This either puts them at an advantageous position where they are very familiar with the cultural beliefs, and therefore, in a better position to understand how the context affects the treatment of women. Or it puts them in a disadvantaged position, in that if they are not spiritually mature, they may not be able to differentiate between the church and the society.

- **Roles**

The following describes how roles affect how women and girls are understood:

1. The culture has contributed to the way we give our tasks at home because hereafter, these children will try to emulate what they were taught while still young. (E16)
2. The jobs we give to our children at home have a significant impact on them because they grow up with this mentality of the specified tasks that were assigned to them while still young. (E17)
3. Children are given work at school according to their gender. (E18)

- **Toys and Games**

The male church elders were in agreement with the members of the *Chigwirizano chamai* that toys and games also have effect. The explanation is as follows:

1. Parents tend to buy toys like guns, cars, etc., for boys; and buy small baby dolls, cooking pots, etc., for girls. (E13)

- **Figurative speech**

A definition has already been given but what follows are the expressions from these male leaders:

1. In a classroom boys are portrayed as fighters and winners. (E14)
2. At home, the husband gives directives to his wife and children. Thus, when he goes to church he treats women in the same manner. (E15)

The following section is for reverends:

2.5.1.21. Reverends

This is the last group to provide their contribution on the impact of the society (context) on the treatment of women. In fact, the issue of context is vital to reverends who preach the gospel every Sunday, because they need to know the context in which they live in order for their message to be meaningful, otherwise preaching out of context is always a risk. Their contributions were also classified into three groups: (1) Roles; (2) Toys and games; (3) Figurative speech.

- **Roles**

Below are their comments on the roles:

1. The issue behind is culture; so children grow up with what their parents do, for example, women go to the maize mill, fetch water and firewood. In these tasks, women take girls and not boys. In the same way, men take boys to the bush to kill animals for relish, or go to the garden to cut trees, etc. (R25)
2. Women at home are entitled to cooking, washing, bearing children and being submissive; while men are entitled to decision making and commanding. (R24)

- **Toys and games**

The reverends also took into consideration what the children use to play with, as a contributing factor to how girls and women are treated. Here is their contribution:

1. It is surprising to see the types of toys parents buy for their children. You will never see them buying a gun and a car toy for a baby girl; they will do that for a boy child. For the girls, they will buy a baby doll with her clothes, plates and cooking pots. (R23)

- **Figurative Speech**

Below is a contribution which expresses figurative speech:

1. Children from a tender age are exposed to speech like: If they are talking to a boy child they will say, “Do not cry like a woman;” and to the girl, they will say, “Sit like a woman”. (R22)

- **Conclusion**

The research results show that ‘context’ has a very big impact on the way women and girls are treated, both in the society and also in the church. It has a greater impact than anything else because even before the arrival of the missionaries, culture was already there. After church service or any spiritual gathering people go back home where they are welcomed and engage in the norms of the society. In this research, the respondents indicated that the roles, children’s toys and games, plus figurative speech (language) has affected, and continues to affect the way one understands the role of women and

girls. Since the Nkhoma Synod is situated within these norms, it means that it bears the characteristics of the society, particularly its reverends, church elders and members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai*, who are among the people of high profile in the village. For example, some are group village headmen, some are chiefs, some are messengers, etc. All three groups, the *Chigwirizano cha amai*, church elders and reverends mentioned the upbringing of the children at home. The tasks given tell who you are, either a girl or a boy. Just by looking at the toys present in a certain home gives a clue as to what type of a baby is in the house, even before the baby is actually seen. The type of figurative speech used in one's home, or at gatherings and meetings, either boosts one's self-esteem or demoralizes one's self-esteem. For example, words like, "do not cry like a woman," naturally portrays a boy as being strong, powerful and energetic. The same words, "do not cry like a woman," portray a negative picture of women because it implies that women cry for no rhyme or reason. This type of comparison demoralizes the self-esteem of women and automatically fosters the development of an inferiority complex. Boys playing with a gun, airplane or a car toy gives them a hard working spirit at school, so that in due course they should drive their own cars, or become soldiers or pilots. In the case of girls, the toy babies or plates and cooking pots which they play with, unknowingly imparts the spirit in them to look forward to the day when they will get married and have their own homes, where they will bear children, look after them, take care of all the house chores and thereafter die. This is the reason girls in the rural areas get married or pregnant at a very tender age of either 14 or 15, because after reaching puberty they see nothing else ahead of them apart from getting married, having their own homes and producing their own children, as this is instilled in them from infancy.

In this case, they do not work hard; even the environment at home does not support and encourage them to work hard at school. The way husbands portray themselves at home can also be devastating. Owing to the cultural factors, they may display themselves as being powerful, controlling of everything, decision makers, money producers and keepers, someone who knows everything and does not err. As for a woman, they may be depicted as a listener, submissive, inferior and ignorant. So although these roles, toys and figurative speech look simple; in that sometimes they are done, bought and said unknowingly, what should be known is that they have a negative impact, more especially when it comes to treating women and girls. They

have a devastating impact not only in the society where she is reduced to a child producer or house worker; but also in the church of God, where she is to remain silent and submissive to the church leadership. The question which I raise at this moment is: “What is the role of the church in this regard?” It looks as though the church, which is supposed to be welcoming, healing and inclusive and empowering has decided to emulate the society, leaving women feeling hopeless and devastated at most times.

After looking at how the context through the roles, toys and figurative speech have affected the way the role of women and girls have been understood; it is also significant to analyse how Sunday school and catechumen classes have contributed towards the way women and girls are perceived. This will be discussed in the following section. The results of this research on how the context has affected the understanding of the role of women and girls has supported what Social Identity Theory is all about, especially with regards to group norms (2.2); stereotyping (3.3.2); and self-categorization (3.3.1). Two groups have been formed here: Boys with designated boyish toys; and girls with designated girlish toys. Boys’ toys identify boys as strong people who will become leaders and managers; while girls’ toys identify them with weak people, who can do nothing other than be at home and bear children, cook and wash clothes. This has an impact on the children as they grow up because they develop the mentality that they cannot become leaders, whether it is in the society or in the church.

5.2.7. Analyzing how the Sunday school environment and catechumen classes have contributed to the perception of women and girls in terms of their teaching and leadership roles

This section is specifically interested in finding out if the teachings of Sunday school and catechumen classes play any role in the way women and girls are perceived. The research question was: **Explain how the environment at Sunday school and catechumen classes have contributed to the way women and men are perceived in terms of their teaching and leadership roles.** It is important to ask such a question because it helps to solicit more information with regards to women and leadership. The fact that the issue of women leadership has been there for decades means that if there is a need for identifying and solving this problem, then it should begin with Sunday school and catechumen classes, where the foundation of the Christian faith begins. There is common saying among the local Malawian tobacco growers which

says, “*Fodya ndi ku nursery*”. It literally means, if you want to have a good harvest of tobacco and make money out of it, then you need to start taking care of the seedlings while they are still at the nursery. If you have a poor nursery, even if you work hard during planting it will not yield good results. Referring to this study, insight into the teachings at Sunday school and catechumen classes will help shed light on why women and girls are treated in the way that they are. Therefore, doing research on these teachings is vital because as far as our Christian faith is concerned, these two areas are considered to be our ‘nursery’. If we have problems in these two areas, then we cannot expect strong and faithful Christians when they grow up.

The collected data was coded and analysed according to the non-cross-sectional data organization. It was thereafter classified into two categories: (1) Sunday school; and (2) Catechumen class. There are three groups of respondents who provided the information here. The first one to contribute is discussed below:

2.5.1.22. Sunday school (Chigwirizano cha amai)

Sunday school is the church at work, reaching out, teaching and winning the lost children and then training them for Christian service (Towns, 1980:19).⁷⁹

The following are the contributions of the members of the *Chigwirizano cha amai* on the Sunday school. Under this category there are two sub-topics, namely: (1) Women teachers are in the majority and all children are treated equally; and (2) Both women and men teach and children are treated equally.

- **Women teachers are in the majority and all children (boys and girls) are treated equally**

These women explained the environment, teachers and teachings of Sunday school in the following manner:

1. Women are the ones who are good teachers of Sunday school. (C1)

⁷⁹ See also Patte (2010:1343) in “The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity,” who defines the term Sunday school as a school held on Sunday for religious education.

2. It is a group of women who are involved in teaching children at Sunday school. (C5)
 3. Although the majority of Sunday school teachers are women, many stories taught in these schools depict male figures, like Joseph and Moses. (C6)
 4. Children in Sunday school are treated as if they are all of one gender. (C7)
- **Both men and women teach and all children are treated equally**

The following contributions were of the view that it is not only women who are teaching in Sunday schools, but that men are also available.

1. There is not much difference in how a boy child and a girl child is treated in Sunday school. (C8)
2. It seems both girls and boys are treated equally. (C10)
3. Both men and women are allowed to teach at Sunday schools. (C12)

2.5.1.23. Sunday school (Male church elders)

The contribution from this group of male church elders also mentioned two sub-topics, namely: (1) Women teachers are in the majority and all children are treated equally; and (2) Both men and women are teachers, and all children are treated equally.

- **Women teachers are in the majority and all children are treated equally**

Just like members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, the following statements show that the male church elders also agree that the women teachers are in majority; and that all children irrespective of their gender are treated equally.

1. We have more women teachers teaching at Sunday school in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod than men. During this time all children sit together regardless of sex. (E13)
2. Since women teachers at Sunday school outnumber the men, many girls also aspire to become Sunday school teachers when they grow up; while many boys deplore the idea. (E15)

3. In Sunday school, both boys and girls are taught together. This helps them to see that before God they are all equal. (E16)
4. In Sunday school, there is not much difference on how girls and boys are both treated; they are all treated equally. (E17)

- **Both women and men teach and all children are treated equally**

In the following contribution, male church elders indicated that it is neither women nor men who are in majority, but that both sexes are involved in teaching.

1. Both men and women are teaching at Sunday schools, there is not any criterion given to support only one group of sex. (E19)

The following contributions are from the reverends:

2.5.1.24. Sunday school (Reverends)

The final group to contribute to the topic of Sunday school is that of the reverends. Sunday school is the foundation where one's Christian faith is laid, and should therefore be central for each and every reverend. The future of the church is determined by how strong or how weak the Sunday school is. The reverends also had two sub-topics: (1) Women teachers are in the majority and all children are treated equally; and (2) Both men and women are teachers and all children are treated equally.

- **Women teachers are in the majority; and all children are treated equally**

Here are some comments that support the statement above that women teachers are in the majority and all children are treated equally:

1. There is not much difference in the way girls and boys are treated in Sunday school. (R21)
2. Children in Sunday schools are equally taught; the only difference being in the area of teachers where the majority are women or girls. (R22)
3. There is no difference in Sunday school, all children sit together; without separating girls from the boys. (R23)

- **Both women and men teach; and all children are treated equally**

See the following contribution from the reverends:

1. Both men and women are teaching Sunday school. (R25)

The preceding section was on Sunday school, the following section is on Catechumen.

2.5.1.25. Catechumen (*Members of Chigwirizano cha amai*)

Patte (2010:1343) has defined catechumen as, “A convert to Christianity receiving training in doctrine and discipline before baptism or one receiving instruction in the basic doctrines of Christianity before admission to communicant membership in a church”. Karen (2005:43) defines catechumen as:

Someone who has never been baptized and so must pass through the entire Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) to enter the church; he goes through Christian formation which is more than just simple learning, but has to do with training and absorbing facts.

The collected data was coded and analysed according to the non-cross-sectional data organization. It was thereafter classified into two classes: (1) Male teachers are in majority; and boys and girls are seated separately. (2) Both men and women are teachers; boys and girls are seated separately. The first group to provide responses was the *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

Their first contribution was on the sub-topic that male teachers are in majority; and that boys and girls are seated separately.

- **Male teachers are in the majority; boys and girls are seated separately**

The following statements from members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* are in agreement that the male teachers are in the majority in catechumen class; with boys and girls seated separately.

- (1) It is hard to understand why many men opt to teach catechumen rather than Sunday school. (C2)
- (2) Even though girls and boys learn together; they have their own seating arrangements, girls have their own place demarcated from boys. (C3)
- (3) Many teachers of catechumen class are men and not women. (C4)

- **Both men and women teach; boys and girls are seated separately**

The following contribution is from members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* who support the notion that both women and men teach catechumen in the classroom, where boys and girls are seated separately.

1. Besides men, there are still women teaching catechumen classes, the only difference with Sunday school is that girls are not allowed to sit together with boys. (C11)

The coming section is on the contributions from the male church elders:

2.5.1.26. Catechumen (Male church elders)

The contributions from the male church elders on Catechumen were also classified into two sub-topics: (1) Male teachers are in the majority, with boys and girls seated separately in the classroom; and (2) Both men and women are teachers with boys and girls seated separately in the classroom.

- **Male teachers are in majority; boys and girls are seated separately in the classroom.**

The following respondents expressed that in the catechumen classes, male teachers are in the majority compared to that of the women. In the classroom, girls sit separately from the boys.

1. In Sunday schools all children sit together, but things change when they go to catechumen classes, since they are now considered to be grown up and need to sit separately. (E14)
2. According to our culture, boys and girls are seated separately in every forum, including catechumen class and church service. (E16)
3. Men believe that teaching Sunday school is of low status; therefore, most of them opt for catechumen. (E18)

- **There are both male and female teachers; boys and girls are seated separately in the classroom**

Among the male church elders, some did not support the idea that the majority of teachers in the catechumen classes were men. Instead, they were of the view that there are both male and female teachers in a classroom, where boys and girls sit separately. The following are their points:

1. Sunday school and catechumen class are taught by both women and men. Girls are advised during counselling sessions to sit separately in catechumen class and even during church service. (E19)
2. The system of girls and boys sitting separately during catechumen classes started long time ago. (E20)

After hearing from the members *Chigwirizano cha amai* and male church elders, the remaining group whose responses are listed in the following section is that of the reverends.

2.5.1.27. Catechumen (Reverends)

One of the main responsibilities of a reverend in a congregation is to make sure that both Sunday school and catechumen classes take place every Sunday; therefore, their contributions are very important. These were classified into two sub-topics: (1) Male teachers are in the majority; with boys and girls seated separately; and (2) Both men and women are teachers; with boys and girls seated separately in the classroom.

- **Male teachers are in the majority; with boys sitting separately from the girls in the classroom**

The following statements express the idea that the male teachers are in the majority:

1. There are very few women involved in teaching catechumen, as compared to those teaching Sunday school. (R21)
2. Since catechumen class is comprised of grown up girls and boys, and sometimes even married people, it is wise to also have male teachers and have the student sit separately. (R23)

3. It is not always easy for women to teach catechumen, but only Sunday school. (R24)

- **Both men and women are teachers; boys and girls sit separately in the classroom**

The supporting statement is as follows:

1. It seems both Sunday school and catechumen classes are taught equally by both women and men. The only difference is in the seating arrangements; where girls sit separately from boys. (R25)

- **Conclusion**

In this section the interviewer sought to find out if the environment in which Sunday school and catechumen classes are taught, has any effect on the perception of women and men, in terms of their teaching and leadership roles. Two things were vividly pointed out in all three groups.

The first outstanding result concerns the environment surrounding these boys and girls. All three groups asserted that the church is not strict when it comes to seating arrangements in the Sunday school. Therefore, children of both sexes sit together without any problem. The basis behind the seating arrangements is to protect the innocence of the child; without exposing them to attraction from the opposite sex. This leads to a learning environment that is free from major disturbances that would occur should the members of the opposite sex sit together, for example, chatting. The results of the research indicated that as the children grow up, the environment changes, especially when they go to catechumen class. This has been attributed to hormonal changes that take place within their bodies at this particular stage of development, increasing attractiveness to members of the opposite sex.

In terms of the teachers, it was discovered by the majority that women are good teachers of Sunday school; and men are good at teaching catechumen classes. This division of teachers has a very negative impact on boys and girls. They grow up with a mentality that is prone to stereotyping, i.e. where Sunday school is considered to be a simple job, and is therefore more suitable for women since they are weak. They also associate Sunday school with the rearing of children; therefore, it is associated with

women. As for catechumen, since it involves more work, it calls for men who are considered to be stronger and wiser, than their female counterpart. This categorization affects the upbringing of the children to such an extent that when they grow up it is hard to explain to a boy who has now matured into a man that even women can become leaders, because to him, women are weak. In that, if they cannot teach catechumen, how can they take up leadership roles which involve wisdom, strength and ability? This has a negative impact upon boys and girls since they are indoctrinated from a very early age that girls and women are a source of evil, they entice men to do evil, therefore, they should be separated from the boys. This sends an incorrect message to the young adults; and in the long run defeats the power of the cross where Jesus already conquered sin.

It was also pointed out by some groups that most of the Bible stories used (especially during Sunday school) are mainly oriented around men, instead of women. They cite, for example, names like Joseph, David, and Abraham, as if there are no outstanding women in the Bible like Esther, Hannah, Phoebe, Deborah and Siserah. With teachings such as these, girls develop an inferiority complex to such an extent that when given an opportunity to lead, they feel they cannot make it. They think they are not entitled to a position of leadership because they have been taught (sometimes directly or indirectly) in Sunday school and catechumen class through bible studies and lessons that only men are achievers and therefore entitled to these positions.

It was theoretically explained in chapter three that culture, through the Social Identity Theory, has a very strong impact on how people look at women. The fact that they stereotype (3.3.2) women as weak is enough reason to categorize (3.3.1) them as teachers of Sunday school and men as teachers of catechumen because they are strong. Each group is assigned their duties based on gender.

It has therefore been verified through the research that the environment and teachings at Sunday school and in catechumen classes have contributed to the way women are perceived in terms of their teaching and leadership roles.

The following section is the last section in this discussion to deal with women and their leadership roles.

5.2.8. Analysing the change of women's status in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod

The research question was: **If the opportunity is given to change the status of women in the church, how do you think this should best be done?** The relevance of this question to this study is in two areas. The first one, is that it will create the opportunity to come up with different ways on how women should be treated in the church; it will also help create a conducive environment in which the concerns of not only the women, but also of the men towards the women, will be addressed. Secondly, this question will help to predict the future of women leaders whether it is for better or for worse.

The data that was collected was coded and analysed through the non-cross-sectional data organization. Thereafter, it was classified into two main sub-topics: (1) Congregations with women leadership; and (2) Congregations without women leadership. These two sub-topics were further divided into smaller topics. Among the congregations with women leadership, there were responses that 'the status of women should change;' while under congregations without women leadership, there were two smaller topics raised, namely: (1) The status of women should change; (2) The status of women should not change.

The data for all these sub-topics and smaller topics will be gathered from the three groups of people, namely: (1) Members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*; (2) Male church elders; (3) Reverends. The first sub-topic to be analysed is that of congregations which already have women leaders.

2.5.1.28. Congregations with women elders and deacons (Members of Chigwirizano cha amai)

These are the congregations which already have women elders and deacons and whose women are allowed to preach during Sunday services from the pulpit. These are mainly urban congregations, with very few in the rural areas.

- **The status of women should change**

In all the congregations where there were women leaders and preachers, their contributions indicated that the status of women should change, but the big challenge was how? Their contributions varied from one group to another. Some said women

should become reverends; others recommended they go for training; a few more suggested that they should be born again and filled with the Holy Spirit. In addition, some said when a woman is chosen as a leader, her husband should also be elected as a leader.

The final group was of the opinion that the status of women should change by withdrawing or dismissing all current women leaders and deacons from their leadership positions because it is unbiblical. Following, is the detailed report on the contributions of the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*. Some of the members suggested that women should be ordained as reverends.

Women ordained as reverends

The following statements that were given support the idea that women should not only be confined to the position of an elder or a deacon, but should also ascend to that of a reverend.

1. Women also need to become reverends because our friends in the south have women reverends and women session clerks. (C1)
2. For a long time women have been oppressed by not taking up leadership roles but we can foresee them now becoming reverends. (C2)
3. Women should also be empowered by taking up the leadership role of a reverend. (C3)
4. I want by the help of God for women to become reverends because they too have that gift. (C4)
5. I am of the view that the time has come for us to become reverends. (C5)

Women training

Another suggestion was the changing of the status of women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod through training. According to The Free Dictionary (2014)⁸⁰, training⁸¹ is defined as, “The process of bringing a person to an agreed standard of proficiency by practice and instruction, for example, training of the priesthood, physical training or college training”. Training has specific goals of improving one’s capacity, capability, productivity and performance. I believe that those who suggested this point had this definition and its goals in mind. The following are their statements:

1. Women leaders need to go through some Bible training in order to be in a position to be able to interpret the Bible, like what Veritas College⁸² does. (C1)
2. There is no way we can be empowered without first going through training. Therefore, I propose training to be done. (C3)
3. Women should attend literacy classes so that they can be empowered. (C5)

Women leaders should be born again and Spirit-filled

John 3:3 defines ‘born again’ as a spiritual rebirth (regeneration) of the human soul, contrasted with the physical birth that everyone experiences. It is a term associated with salvation in Christianity.

By saying that they want Spirit-filled and born again leaders, they are on the one hand meaning that they want women leaders who whose souls or spirits have been regenerated; and on the other hand, also have the indwelling Holy Spirit. Below are their contributions:

1. Women in leadership position should be born again; people filled with the Holy Spirit. (C4)

⁸⁰ Page number is not given.

⁸¹ See also Patte (2010:1343) in the Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity who defines training, “as the act, process or method of one that trains or he says it is the skill, knowledge or experience acquired by one that trains e.g. training college.”

⁸² Veritas College in Malawi is an organization that specializes in lay leadership development; their focus is on contextual exegesis, application and communication. Women are the majority in the training in the different churches, including the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod.

2. Just as men; women leaders should be chosen on the criteria that they are filled with the Spirit and have wisdom (Acts 6:1-4). (C6)
3. In the same manner that the Holy Spirit came upon on all those in the upper room, so now the Holy Spirit needs to be on all women leaders. (C7)

These were the statements of members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, suggesting that indeed the status of women should change by becoming reverends, born again and Spirit-filled; as well as through training. The following session is on male church elders.

2.5.1.29. Congregations with women church elders and deacons (Male church elders)

After everyone has suggested that the status of women should change, the next step is to get the necessary approval from the male church elders. Therefore, their contributions play a pivotal role in determining the status of women, and whether this will change.

- **The status of women should change**

This group also accepted that the status of women should change, by: (1) Ordination; (2) Training; and (3) By also ordaining the wife's husband.

Women ordained as reverends

The following statement supported the idea of ordaining women as reverends:

1. After accepting women to be elders and deacons, I am of the view that they should also become reverends. (E13)

Women Training

Like in the case of the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, the men too suggested the training of women as one way of changing their status. See the following statements:

1. It is important to train women in order to empower them as leaders of the church. (E14)
2. The church should involve women in training like that of Veritas, so that they become acquainted with the Bible. (E15)

3. Many women are illiterate, it is therefore crucial for them to start attending adult literacy classes. (E16)

Husbands of women leaders should also be elected as leaders

This is an idea which revolves around having the husband as a leader - not by virtue of being elected by people or called by God, but by virtue of being the husband of a woman leader who has been elected by God and the people. In this case, the husband mainly plays a protective role; protecting the wife from being proposed by other male elders. Below is the suggested statement:

1. If they want to elect the woman as an elder or deacon then the husband too should also be elected so that both of them should become leaders. This is especially important during church visits so that they can travel together, instead of travelling with a male church elder who is not her husband. (E16)

After considering the contributions of the male church elders, the researcher moves onto the suggestions made by the reverends on how the status of women can be changed. This is discussed next.

2.5.1.30. Congregations with women elders and deacons (Reverends)

Church members treat reverends as people of wisdom; therefore, they expect guidance from them for various issues, of which the change of women's status is just one example. The following group of reverends supported the notion of change:

- **The status of women should change**

They listed three areas in which women's status can be changed: (1) Should be reverends; (2) Women training; (3) Women leadership should be stopped.

Women should be ordained as reverends

The following responses support the suggestion that women should be ordained as reverends:

1. I am of the view that women should become reverends because it is God who ordains people and not man. (R24)

2. The work of The Lord is just too much to be done by just one group of men; women should be ordained as reverends as one way of overcoming the shortage of reverends in our Synod. (R25)

Women training

Below are the statements encouraging women to undergo training:

1. The key to leadership roles is education; without it women leadership will fail. I therefore encourage women to at least attain a basic education or training. (R24)
2. The Synod should open doors for theological training for women, as there are many women who aspire to do theology but no provision is made for them. (R25)

Women leaders should quit

Among the three groups of respondents, it was only suggested by the group of reverends (not the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, or male church elders) that women leaders should quit. See below for their contribution:

1. From the Old Testament up till now you will never find a woman Levite or woman priest. This has never happened and we do not want it to happen; therefore, our Synod should not confuse women leadership and women ministry. God, through Paul, does not allow women leadership; therefore, I would suggest that the ordaining of women elders and deacons should stop. Women should instead be encouraged to continue with their *Chigwirizano cha amai*. (R21)

This section mainly focused on those congregations (both rural and urban) which have women elders and deacons. They suggested the change of women's status through five different ways, as was indicated above. The following section is on those congregations who do not have women leaders.

2.5.1.31. Congregations without women elders and deacons (Members of Chigwirizano cha amai)

These are the congregations who due to the reasons discussed earlier on in this chapter do not have women elders and deacons. The majority of these congregations are situated in rural areas, with very few in the urban areas. Under this heading there are two sections as indicated in 5.2.8. The first one is on the change of women's status, which is discussed below.

- **The status of women should change**

Since there has never been a woman leader in these congregations, their current earnest desire is to at least have women elders, deacons and preachers. In as much as they want women reverends, for now they are willing to start with just elders, deacons and preachers. Only after these have been chosen, will they pursue the ordination of women reverends.

Women leaders and preachers

Below are the statements supporting the idea that women should become elders and deacons:

1. I would have loved that women too become elders and deacons. (C8)
2. The church should accept women elders and deacons because in some areas of the Nkhoma Synod they already have women elders and deacons. (C9)
3. Women should also become elders and deacons; and thereafter, reverends. (C10)
4. The Synod has to change by also allowing women to become elders and deacons and not just confining them to work in the kitchen. (C11)
5. The congregation should allow women to take up leadership roles. (C12)

2.5.1.32. Congregations without women elders and deacons (Male church elders)

- **Status of women should change**

Some male church elders (although few) indicated the desire to have women leaders in their congregation. They suggested that women should become elders and deacons. They also opted for women to preach during Sunday services. They also mentioned the issue of training, see this discussion below:

Women leaders and preachers

1. Women should be treated equally to men, with regards to leadership roles. They should be accepted and respected as human beings and not stigmatized. So let us choose them to be church elders and deacons. (E17)

Women training

This was another area which male church elders suggested if women really aspire to become elders and deacons but also preachers. Their responses are as follows:

1. Women have to go through training before attaining any leadership roles. (E18)
2. One of the requirements for an elder or deacon, even for men, is knowing how to read and write. Therefore, I encourage women to go for adult literacy classes. (E19)

2.5.1.33. Congregations without women elders and deacons (Reverend)

In this section we have reverends whose congregations do not have women leaders, but they are of the view that women should become elders and deacons.

- **The status of women should change**

They suggested that the starting point for changing the status of women should be preaching and inducting them as elders and deacons. Their contribution is as follows:

1. Women, who feel they have been called to become church leaders and preachers should go ahead and attain these positions. Failing to do so would mean failing God, who in turn will be angry with us. (R22)

This section was about the congregations who up till now do not have women leaders and preachers; but also still hold to the notion that it is wrong. The forthcoming section is on those congregations who do not have women leaders and preachers, but also don't want such a thing to happen in their congregations or in the general Synod.

- **The status of women should not change**

Although the Synod of 2007 and 2009 endorsed and declared that women could now start preaching and become elders and deacons, there are still some who have resisted the decision. The first group to resist are discussed below:

Members of Chigwirizano cha amai

Some of the people who are against women leadership are the women themselves. Here are their responses:

1. We are failures, I don't think there is any way our status can change; let men be leaders and not us. We should remain the way we are. (C11)
2. It's true that in other congregations women are taking up leadership roles (e.g. elders and deacons). This is a Chinese type⁸³ of leadership and not from God. (C12)

Male church elders

Despite the fact that some of the male church elders in the congregations where there are no woman leaders said change needs to start with the ordaining of women leaders; some still completely defied the idea of women leadership, as per the statements below:

1. The church of God is run differently from the way the world runs. Worldly things can change anytime and anyhow, but not godly things. The Word of

⁸³ Since many Chinese materials which are being sold in Malawi are not durable and don't last, people have nicknamed any fake or non-durable thing as Chinese. So in this case, women leadership is referred to as Chinese for two reasons: (1) They think it is not from God; (2) They think it will not last for long.

God does not change so how can we change the status of women by empowering them to become leaders. (E17)

2. Heavenly things don't change, that's a fact! So changing the status of women would be like fighting against God. (E18)
3. I think it should suffice for women to have the Chigwirizano cha amai, and therefore should leave men alone to have the leadership roles. (E19)
4. Where else in the Bible have you heard about women leadership? (E20)

Reverends

Among the group who advocated for the quitting of women leaders are the role models of the church, the reverends. Their statements are as follows:

1. The status of women in the church cannot be changed. If any, then it will be God Himself changing their status. Their status cannot change because they are women and they will remain women. (R21)
2. It is not an issue of oppressing women by not electing them as leaders but it is an issue of being obedient to God's Word. Therefore, women's status should not change. (R22)
3. I believe the Word of God is above everything. Therefore, we should not conform to the patterns of the world; instead, our minds should be renewed by God's Word. The world should not pressurize us into condoning women leadership. (R22)

• Conclusion

This section focused on changing the status of women should the opportunity be given. It was especially noted that in the urban congregations where they already have women elders and deacons, that some want women to become reverends; others suggested for women to go through training; while others opted for them to be born again and Spirit-filled. Still, others argued that unless a woman's husband is also elected as a leader, it makes no sense to choose a woman as a leader. It is surprising to hear men raise this idea, because at present we have male church elders whose wives

are not church elders. There has never been a query from their wives demanding that they too should be elected as church elders, simply because their husbands are church elders. The other group advocated the dismissal of all current women leaders from their leadership positions.

It was interesting to note that the majority who supported the idea of women becoming reverends were women themselves; unlike the male church elders and reverends. This sends an important message to the leadership, if not only to the congregations but also to the Synod, of how women feel called by God to serve Him, even at the position of a reverend.

It is striking to discover that even though women know that no one can become an elder or deaconess unless she/he knows how to read and write, very few pointed this out. This shows the ignorance of women on how serious this rule applies to everyone aspiring to these positions of church leadership, irrespective of gender.

It is unfortunate to realize that the point of being born again and Spirit-filled, which was supposed to be supported by more contributions, ended up being the least. This point was neither raised by the reverends nor the church elders - the final decision makers on who to place in these leadership positions. This makes one wonder what criteria they use when choosing a leader, especially if they do not consider this point as a priority. I see this criterion of being born again and Spirit-filled as vital points as far as church leadership is concerned.

The outcry with regards to the issue of women leadership among women, and some few male elders and reverends, is a clear indication that this issue is not only aspired to by urban congregations and by working class groups, but also for almost all women. This is a clear indication of how God deals with His children. He does not look at the outward appearance. He calls everyone, irrespective of their background or gender, whether rich or poor, slave or a free person, male or female (Gal 3:28).

It is once again disturbing to discover that the majority of those who are saying that the status of women should not change (in the congregations where there are no women leaders and preachers), or should change (implying that women leaders should quit), are the male elders and reverends. It is disturbing because these are the decision makers in the church. This means that it will be very hard to have women leadership

fully accepted because those who are responsible for making the decisions are actually opposed to it. For it to be possible for a positive change⁸⁴ to take place in the status of women in the Nkhoma Synod, would require for their minds to be renewed.

It was more surprising to discover that among those saying that the status of women should not change, or in other words, women should not be leaders, are women themselves (although very few). In as much as I applaud their stand because it balances the research (that is, not making it one-sided), I fear the basis for their argument, that they are failures and weak. This destroys the ability which God has entrusted in women.

It is astonishing to see that the argument made by the church elders and reverends, that the status of women should not change (that they should not become leaders) is based on the Word of God. This has to do with biblical interpretation – so as to help them see how the Word of God should be interpreted. Otherwise, instead of using the Word of God to help the people; the Word of God is used to oppress them. This is what Chapter six will be about.

5.2.9. Research summary

After fully analyzing the empirical research, it is vital to summarize the research findings according to the following categories:

The current relationship between members of Chigwirizano cha amai and the leadership of the church

Of all the group respondents interviewed for this project, half of the group indicated a good relationship based on the fact that the leadership of the church accepted the establishment of *Chigwirizano cha amai*. One quarter indicated a poor relationship because of the absence of women leadership in most congregations, especially in rural areas. The other quarter said the relationship is neither poor nor good; it all depends on the type of leadership at that particular time.

⁸⁴ Positive change is referring to the change that will empower and encourage women leadership.

The effect/impact of the first missionaries, context and Sunday school/catechumen class on the treatment of women

In all three groups interviewed (the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, male church elders and reverends), the majority agreed that the way the first missionaries presented the gospel affected the way women are being treated in the church. The fact that they did not ordain any woman into leadership is the basis for their argument for resisting women in leadership. Only one quarter indicated that the way the the first missionaries presented the gospel was good because women were included in the church services, leading them to salvation.

Regarding the context, all members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, church elders and reverends agreed that the way in which children are treated; the distinct toys that are bought for each gender; and the specific roles assigned to each gender, still has a very big impact on the treatment of women and girls, both in the rural and urban areas.

As for Sunday school and catechumen classes, all three groups agreed that at Sunday school all the children sit together irrespective of gender; but as they grow up and starts catechumen, then the seating arrangements change, with girls being separated from the boys. The reason behind the separation is the attraction that develops between the opposite sexes. Almost 99% were in agreement that in Sunday school female teachers are in the majority, with very few men; while in catechumen classes, the opposite is true with more males than females.

The sidelining of women

Out of the 25 groups, 15 of them (mostly rural congregations) said women are sidelined because they are not chosen as leaders; while ten groups (mostly urban) said they are not sidelined because they are incorporated into the leadership of the church.

The Synod is divided

Out of the 25 groups, 23 of them indicated that there is a division in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. The remaining two groups refuted the fact that there is division.

The future of women

Out of the 25 groups interviewed, four of the reverend groups resolved not to provide the information. Therefore, out of the 21 remaining groups which participated, more than half of them confided in the researcher that there is a bright future; while less than half indicated no future for women leadership.

The change of women's status

Out of the 20 groups of women interviewed, 18 indicated that they want their status to change so that they can be ordained as reverends, made possible through training and by electing born again and Spirit-filled women leaders.

Out of the 8 groups of male church elders, 7 of them indicated that there must be no change in status; while 4 out of the 5 groups of reverends also took the stand that the status of women should not change.

5.2.10. Deduction

The data collected reveals that the main contributing factor to the current crisis in women leadership is due to the interpretation of some biblical texts, like 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12; beside the issues of culture (context) and history of the first missionaries (see chapter one and chapter two). That these are the contributing factors can be deduced from the following:

1. Both male church elders and reverends articulated that God's Word is above all else, therefore, the church is advised not to conform to worldly pressure and give in to women leadership.
2. Some reverends believe that restricting women from leadership positions is not an issue of oppressing them, but is rather an issue of obeying God's Word.
3. Male church elders challenged the changing of women's status to becoming reverends, for doing so is fighting against God Himself who says women should be quiet.
4. All the respondents agreed that culture (context); the language people use; and the roles given to a particular sex, has contributed to the way women are treated both in the church and in society.

5. It is evident from the respondents interviewed that even the minor things like the toys used by children contribute towards how women and girls are treated.

The research results also show that the Social Identity Theory developed in chapter three is indeed in full swing in the Nkhoma Synod. This has been proved through the aspects of ‘self-categorization, stereotyping and its norms,’ which are operative among the groups of *Chigwirizano cha amai* and the leadership of the church comprised of men. In comparison, the *Chigwirizano cha amai* can be differentiated from the other groups of men who consider themselves to be the decision makers, as well as more knowledgeable, strong and worthy of preaching. At the same time, women have been stereotyped as weak vessels, submissive and passive listeners. It is this “stereotyping syndrome” that has victimized women as far as leadership roles are concerned, because gender roles are attached to it. As such, women are given roles like welcoming visitors, cleaning the church, teaching Sunday school and singing in the choir. The leadership roles are assigned to the men. If by the grace of God a woman is chosen as the church elder or a deacon, then she is just reduced to being a passive listener and not a decision maker. What is quite significant from the research results, is that by forming *Chigwirizano cha amai*, it means that the women are self-categorizing themselves from the men. This is also problematic, in that their self-categorizing affects their behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, norms, ways of conduct, emotional reactions, as well as physical appearance towards the other group, which in this case is the church leadership. This in fact has somehow aggravated the problem of women leadership because the men tend to think that *Chigwirizano cha amai* is sufficient for the women, therefore, there is no need for them to attain leadership positions.

After looking at these contributing factors, a multi-dimensional theory is therefore suggested for the church elders and reverends of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod to interpret the Word of God within their context. Also, after discovering through the research that men are continuously stereotyping women, hence, disempowering them; and women are continuously self-categorizing themselves, hence, encouraging men to keep on stereotyping them; therefore, stereotyping and self-categorization should be discouraged at all cost. This normative task will be discussed in chapter 6.

5.3. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this chapter was to present, interpret and translate all the coded empirical data that was collected for this project with the overall aim of determining why there are very few women elders and deacons; and not even a single woman reverend in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. The goal was to identify the influencing factors behind this dilemma. Therefore, the researcher conducted a qualitative research study among the following groups: (1) Members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*; (2) Church elders; and (3) Reverends. The empirical data was then collected, evaluated and interpreted in line with the Social Identity Theory discussed in chapter three; the way Nkhoma interpreted 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12, and the historical/cultural background discussed in chapters one, two and four. In particular, these two research dimensions provided the necessary context for interpreting the empirical data.

After going through the historical probe, cultural probe, the probe on how the CCAP Nkhoma Synod interpretes 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12; and finally the empirical research, it is now imperative to investigate and follow a more accountable way of interpreting these biblical texts. Chapter four indicated that there is a serious problem when it comes to interpreting the Word of God, especially the two passages indicated in the beginning of this paragraph in the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod (cf 1.1.1). Therefore, the coming chapter will focus on re-interpreting the Word.

CHAPTER 6: READING 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35 AND 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-12 MULTIDimensionALLY

6.1. INTRODUCTION

It was indicated in chapter one that the Nkhoma Synod is using some biblical passages to keep women from attaining leadership roles. Chapter four (4.1.2.3) clearly indicated that there is a problem; which was proved in chapter five (5.2.2), as is evident in the research results. It has been discovered that the problem lies with how some of the members of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod interpret the two texts of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2: 11-12. The question now is, “How do we respond to this problem?” I respond in this dissertation by reading these texts multi-dimensionally, instead of through a one-dimensional approach. This exercise of reading multi-dimensionally is what Osmer (2008:4) calls, “the normative task,” that of explaining how things ought to be going on. In this case, we are looking at how 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2: 11-12 ought to be interpreted.

It has therefore been discovered that there is a serious problem in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod when it comes to interpreting the Word of God. Many reverends and church elders have misinterpreted some biblical texts by disregarding their context. This has resulted in women being judged as inferior to men. For example, in chapter five (5.2.8), the question was raised as to how best the status of women could change if given the opportunity? Among the numerous answers given, one response had to do with theological training. In as much as this is important, the fear is: “How will they read the Bible, the culture and the history?” If they continue to read and interpret the Scriptures in the same way the Synod is currently doing, then there will be no difference to the present situation where some biblical texts are being used to oppress and discriminate against women, instead of liberating them. The status of women will only change if those obtaining theological training start using the multi-dimensional approach to re-read the Word of God. It is for this reason, therefore, that I, in this segment want to tackle this problem in a profound way by re-reading these texts.

I am going to look at three phases of this multi-dimensional approach to interpreting the texts of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12: (1) Literary aspects; (2) Social-cultural aspects; and (3) Theological-rhetorical aspects. I will start with literary aspects of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

6.2. 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35

6.2.1. Literary aspects

It is important to look at the literary aspects, but before I go any further, it is significant to first answer the following questions: What is it that I am doing? Who is involved? What strategies does the author employ to focus the attention of his/her audience? Why is it important to carry out such an exercise?

With the literary aspects, one tries to look at words, paragraphs, sentences, phrases, etc. It is the starting point of the interpreting process where one takes note of the literary aspects, asking questions on the form. With regards to the strategies, the author normally identifies verbs, subsidiary verbs, purposes, phrases and other clause and recurring words. The next question to ask is, “Why do I start with the text in front of me?” The answer is because I want to allow the text to speak on its own first and to know the literary thrust of it.

The literary aspects are very important for the following reasons: (1) They provide a common ground for understanding and for interpretation. (2) They preserve the message from being distorted. (3) The ‘form’ of the literary aspects secures the survival of the meaning after the text (Ricoeur, 1975:71). After answering the above questions, I now engage in unpacking these literary aspects.

First Corinthians 14:34-35 falls within a bigger scope of the whole book of 1 Corinthians, so this will be my point of departure.

This letter known as 1 Corinthians was one of several letters that the Apostle Paul dispatched to the house churches in Corinth (Coogan, 2011:139). Corinth was the capital of Achaia, a magnificent city of about 100, 000 people built in the shadow of the Acrocorinth (Greek for high Corinth) located between the mainland of Greece and the Peloponnese (Selvidge, 2003:246).

After looking at the city of Corinth, let me now move on to the Corinthian correspondence.

Unlike the letter to the Romans, which had a secretary, Tertius (see Romans 16:22), 1 or 2 Corinthians does not have a secretary. First Corinthians 16:21-23 indicates that Paul followed the usual ancient custom of dictating the letter to another person and

from his (Paul's) comments in Timothy 16:10-11, it is likely that Timothy carried the letter to Corinth (Achtemeier, Green & Thompson, 2001:333).

This was about the correspondence; I now turn to the structure and outline of 1 Corinthians. Richards (1991:128-198) asserts that the structure of Paul's letters were based on the Greco-Roman letter form. Below is the outline:

1. Opening greeting and thanksgiving (1:1-9).
2. Paul's response to reports of problems in the Corinthian church (1:10-6:20).
3. Paul's response to a letter from the Corinthian church (7:1-16:12).
 - A. About marriage (7:1-40).
 - B. About food sacrificed to idols (8:1-11:1).
 - (i) The problem and its effects (8:1-13).
 - (ii) Paul's example: Giving up his rights (9:1-27).
 - (iii) Lessons from the past (10:1-22).
 - (iv) Conducting admonitions (10:23-11:1)
 - C. About worship (11:2-14:40)
 - (i) Head coverings in worship (11:2-14:40).
 - (ii) The Lord's Supper (11:17-34).
 - D. About spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40).
 - (i) Various gifts, one body (12:1-30).
 - (ii) Love: The more excellent way (13:1-13).
 - (iii) Bringing order to worship (14:26-40).
 - E. About resurrection (15:1-58)
 - (i) Handing on the gospel: The resurrection of Christ (15:1-11).
 - (ii) The resurrection to come (15:12-34)
 - (iii) The nature of the resurrection body (15:35-58).
 - F. About the collections for Jerusalem (16:1-4).
4. Conclusion: Travel plans, exhortation and final greetings (16:5-24).

After looking at Corinth as a town and 1 Corinthian correspondence and its structure, I now go on to explore the actual text of verses 34-35.

Paul's directives to women in these verses can be understood properly only within Paul's larger discussion of spiritual gifts, because chapter 14 is wholly concerned with the application of the principle which has been revealed in chapters 12:31-14:1 (Morgan, 1947:110). In chapters 12-14, Paul dealt with issues posed to him regarding spiritual gifts. The extent of his response indicates the deep-seated nature of the division between those who possessed, and those who did not possess certain highly valued gifts (Coogan, 2011:145). Paul acknowledged the diversity of gifts as sourced in the same Spirit, the same Lord Jesus and the same God. He recognized too the communal nature of these gifts: to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (Ellis, 1989:26-47). The marvelous chapter 13 is about love. Paul was saying to Christian people in Corinth and Christians everywhere that what is to be truly coveted and truly desired, is love. That is the great truth.

Then chapter 14 begins with, "follow after love." In summary, Morgan (1947:110-116) asserts that gifts are for service. Every gift the Spirit bestows constitutes equipment in some form or another, for service towards others. The very holding and possession and exercise of a gift is of value personally, but must test its value by the influence it exerts upon others. Consequently, love is the true Law of desire. Covet the best gifts, and the most excellent way, "follow after love."

Verse 34, "Women should remain silent in the churches," means either to stop speaking as in verse 30 or to hold one's tongue, or hold one's peace or to refrain from using a particular kind of speech or speech in a presupposed context. Thiselton (2000:1152-1153) suggests that since 1 Corinthians 11:5 makes it clear that Paul approves of women using prophetic speech; their silence is more probably due to their sitting in judgment over prophetic speech which may come from their husbands, i.e. sifting prophetic speech, or to a constant intervention of questions (see verse 35) under the guise of sifting what has been said. Morgan (1947:110) explains further that the verb "to speak," may mean talking, questioning, arguing, protesting or chattering. Morgan asserts that Paul was undoubtedly warning against arguments in these fellowship meetings where women were taking a very definite part, questioning, protesting, trying to show their ability and their freedom and doing so in an improper way, thereby creating confusion, where there should have been peace and quiet. Morgan (1947:119) concurs with Thiselton (2000:1153) that Paul was certainly not

saying that a woman had no right to pray or prophesy in the church, because he had already given instructions as to how, and under what conditions she was to do it (1 Corinthians 11:5-6). Instead Paul was against the attitude taken by the women who were indulging in contentious, strident speech. They were to keep silent and refrain from asking questions and spurring discussions, disrupting to the quietness and fellowship in the church.

Verse 34b, “as the Law says”, was referring to the Greek and Roman laws which sought to restrain disorderly and irresponsible conduct of women in the practice of religion (Kroeger & Evans 2002:662-663).

After looking at some literary aspects of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, I now turn to historical-cultural aspects of the same text.

6.2.2. Historical-cultural aspects

The previous section was on literary aspects, where some words, phrases and metaphors were closely scrutinized with the aim of finding a more accountable meaning of the passage. Once I have seen the words, sentences, images, etcetera, I still have to take another step by asking, “How did the socio-cultural world behind these words and sentences look like? What was the probable religious, political, economic and geographic climate to which the metaphors and images in the text referred? How were women, slaves and children treated? These are the questions that a literary analysis cannot (necessarily) answer, and this is where the need for probing into historical-cultural aspects comes in. We thus still deal with the same text, but from a different angle.

Besides the above questions, another obvious question needs to be asked, and that is, “Why is it important to consider the historical-cultural aspects when interpreting the Bible?” It is important because when you understand where people come from, you have a better chance of understanding the words they use and why they use them; it is only then that the passage starts to make sense and know why people behave the way they behave. Kanyoro (2002:19) argues that the culture of readers in Africa has much influence on the way the biblical text is understood and used in communities. She asserts that failing to know the nuances of the culture in which the Bible is read or

preached has wide-reaching repercussions for the exegesis of texts. In agreement with her (Kanyoro), Njoroge and Reamonn (1994:30) state the following:

Re-reading the Bible from our own eyes is important because models of ministry must get their orientation from the challenges people face in their particular social context. When the church gets its orientation from women's experiences of violence, sub-ordination, exclusion, low self-esteem, etcetera, it must take into account some cultural conditions which are unique in the African context.

After looking at the reasons as to why the historical-cultural aspects are necessary, I now move on to the socio-cultural background of the two texts under discussion. I start with a broad historical and socio-cultural view on the cities of Corinth and Ephesus during Pauline and post-Pauline periods, which may be of broad significance and interest but not necessarily directly applicable to the letters of 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy.

The letter of 1 Corinthians was written by Paul; and the recipients were the churches in Corinth, the capital of Achaia (Capes, 2007:68-78). Co-senders of this letter were Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, and Sosthenes (1 Cor 1:1). This epistle was written while Paul was in Ephesus in the Roman province of Asia (1 Cor 16:8, 19a). Thompson, Green and Achtemeier (2001:334-336) suggest that the collection must have been written after the meeting between Paul and some other apostles in Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10) where it was agreed that Paul should assemble such a collection. This gives a date around CE 53 or 54 (cf. Coogan, 2011:139).

The letter follows the customary Hellenistic form. Coogan (2011:140) gives two factors that led the apostle to dispatch 1 Corinthians. The first factor was the report Paul had received from Chloe's people (1 Cor 1:11) that the church was rife with quarrels and divisions. This deeply disturbed Paul, but could not personally make a visit at this time; so he sent his co-worker, Timothy, to renew his pastoral interests and remind them of his ways (1 Cor 4:14-17). The second factor was due to a letter that a delegation from Corinth brought that posed several questions to Paul about matters in which they needed some guidance. Paul felt a deep burden for these churches; he knew these reports and this letter demanded a response, but since he could not leave for Corinth immediately, he crafted and dispatched this letter in his place.

First Corinthians as a whole falls within the socio-cultural aspects of what was called the “Greco-Roman or Hellenism”. Koester (1994:41) has defined the term Hellenism as, “The amalgamation of Western and Near-Eastern cultures under the auspices of Greek education during the period from Alexander to the beginnings of Christianity” (cf. Achtemeier et al., 2001:21).

The most characteristic phenomenon of this period was the intensification of the process of “Hellenization,” namely, the expansion of the Greek language, education and culture, initiated by the establishment of Macedonia and Greek political dominion over the nations of the former Persian Empire (Koester, 1994:41). After defeating several kingdoms, Alexander the Great managed to extend Greek culture and the Greek language over the entire Eastern world. The Greek language had a number of dialects, but it was the Attic dialect of Athens that became dominant. It spread abroad through the commercial, political and literary supremacy of Athens. Machen (1976:28) gives the name that is usually applied to this Attic dialect as “the Koine,” which is the common language. It became a world language and a common medium of communication between men of various languages, so much so that even when the Romans conquered the East, they found the Greek language to be most dominant which they did not uproot. For doing so, says Machen (1976:28) would have been contrary to the Roman policy of toleration.

As such, when the Romans became masters of a Greek-speaking world, the Greek language continued to be the language of trade, the language of international intercourse, the ordinary language of the cities and along with Latin, the language of government administration (Machen, 1976:28). As for the Jews, their main language was Aramaic, a language of the Semitic family.

Machen (1976:34) asserts that at the time of Christ, Aramaic was the spoken language of the Palestinian Jews, so much so that even in the synagogues, the Old Testament passages after having been read in Hebrew were translated orally into the language which the people could understand. But since the time of Alexander the Great, Greek language made its way into Palestine, for the Greek government came with its own Greek culture and language. Therefore, Palestine in the first century may be called a bilingual country because Greek and Aramaic were both in use. Moreover, the early church in Jerusalem was composed not only of Hebrews but also of Grecians or

Hellenists (Acts 6:1) and the union of the Greek language with the Hebrew religion gave rise to the “Septuagint” translation of the Old Testament (Machen, 1976:41).

After looking at the language of the time, I now turn to the economic climate at the time. In the Hellenistic period, especially in the countries of the East, agriculture remained the primary basis for economic prosperity and one of the most important sources of income, for both villages and cities (Koester, 1994:66). Ferguson (1987:60) elaborates by saying that the olive, the vine, grain and sheep were the basis for the agricultural economy of the Mediterranean world. The Greek cities consisted of essentially three classes: The upper class was formed by the established aristocratic families who owned large estates from which they drew their wealth. The middle class consisted of farmers, craftsmen, merchants and teachers. This group included citizens, as well as foreigners, free people and slaves. The third class was comprised of a disenfranchised and unemployed proletariat, consisting of freed slaves without patron, petty farmers who had lost their land to debt, widows and children, and foreigners who failed to make a fortune (Koester, 1994:66).

The contrast between the rich and poor became more pronounced. Koester (1994:45) says that the Greeks had a highly developed economy, which could be put to immediate use, stimulating economic growth in the new realms. Koester further explains that the economic horizon was expanded by further expeditions of discovery, such as the sea route to India and Sudan, plus the introduction and development of an entity of social and political life, the Greek city.

Some of the cities that prospered were Athens, as the major trade center; and Delphi, as a center for religious life. Another important element of the administrative and economic policies of the Hellenistic empires was tax. Just as income from agriculture was the primary source of wealth, so rents from the leases of agricultural land and real estate taxes became the most important source of revenue. Unfortunately, these taxes became a heavy burden under Ptolemaic rule. Workers on the farms and in the industry received little money, which was subject to rigid taxation (Koester, 1994:46, 52-53). With the passing of time, the economy started to decline. Ferguson (1987:60) attributes this decline to the absence of large industry in the ancient world, but he explains that the major limitation on its economic development was the absence of technology for mass production. Koester (1994:54) explains further as to what led to

the decline of the economy. She asserts that at the end of the 3rd Century and the beginning of the 2nd Century, the pressure of bureaucracy increased.

This resulted in further restrictions imposed on the possession of private property and higher demands for levels of service. This resulted in riots and insurrections leading to the general deterioration of the economy. Koester (1994:54-55) says that the primary cause of these riots and insurrections was the centralized system of state monopoly, which imposed oppressive regulations on the native working class, but never granted a share of the proceeds to their labor.

From the economy of the Hellenistic world, I now move on to the political situation of the time when 1 Corinthians was written. The Hellenistic states extended over large areas, encompassing millions of inhabitants, demanding a completely new concept of the state on the part of the Macedonian and Greek conquerors, whose traditional image of political community was the city-state or the petty kingdom (Koester, 1994:45). The Hellenistic empires relied largely on the inherited Persian or Egyptian administrations, since there were no existing Greek models. The vast majority of people in Greece, Asia Minor or in the Roman Empire were peasants living in villages and towns subordinate to and exploited by the urban elites (Brook and Ringe, 2002:14). But by the middle of the first century before Christ, the city of Rome extended to all around the Mediterranean Sea. Rome was at first a republic, but in 48 B.C. after the civil war, Julius Ceaser acquired the supreme power. He was succeeded by Augustus Ceaser in 27 B.C., the same year is regarded as the beginning of the Roman Empire.

The power was placed on him as the Ceaser (Machen, 1976:20). Machen (1976:21) explains further that Augustus was welcomed as the savior because after many years of ruinous civil war, the Empire at last brought permanent peace, called “The Roman Peace,” so much so that under this lasting peace there was a healthy development of commerce and a remarkable system of roads, which rendered land travel probably easier. The Roman Empire had its own form of administration. It was comprised of the provinces, the local government, which did not have a perfect uniformity throughout the Empire; thus, many of the cities retained a certain amount of independence. The final category of the administration was the Roman citizenship, which was obtained either through inheritance, like Paul did, or through money.

Having a Roman citizenship had some special privileges, for example, Paul being a Roman citizen legally exempted him from the most degrading forms of punishment and gave him the right to appeal to the court of the Emperor (Machen, 1994:21-24).

After explaining the language, economic climate and political situation, it is now necessary to review their religious beliefs. Ferguson (1987:112) inaugurates his speech by saying that the religion of ancient Greece had no creed, there was nothing like a code or system of morality, which had to be accepted by everyone who worshipped Athena or Zeus. From the time of Homer, religion had been a kind of artistic polytheism.

The gods were conceived of having passions, like men. So in its characteristic form, Greek religion was aesthetic rather than moral; it was based upon the sense of beauty rather than upon the conscience (Machen, 1994:29).

Ferguson (1987:114) describes these gods as ageless and deathless. They were not limited by physical restrictions, could take on any shape, go anywhere quickly and invisibly, and could do things that human could not do. Some of the names of these gods were Zeus, the father of gods and men in a patriarchal sense; Hera, wife of Zeus, associated with marriage and women; Athena, virgin goddess of wisdom, fine and skilled arts; Aphrodite, goddess of love, beauty and fertility, to name but a few. Sacrifices were offered to these gods in order to make one's wish happen; or unwanted things to go away. All these cults were represented at Corinth. For example, near the city stood a statue of Poseidon, a temple of Aphrodite and the sanctuaries of Asclepius and Isis. In the city stood a sanctuary of the Ephesian Artemis, a brass statue of Athena, a temple to Octavia, sister of Augustus Ceaser and a sanctuary of Jupiter Capitolinus (Harrisville, 1987:12-13).

People also worshipped the emperor. They erected statues of him in the temples of their gods; they constructed new temples for the emperor in the center of the city; and made shrines for him. Major festivals, like the Olympic Games, were renamed after the emperor, for instance, the Caesarean Games; and the appropriate response from the people was to declare their *fides* (Latin word for loyalty or faith) (Brook & Ringe, 2002:11). People also believed that a proper burial was very important because without it the soul of the deceased would wonder around as a permanent "displaced

person” and always be at unrest. They also believed that the dead continue to engage in the same activities as on earth; and that what is important in this life continues to be so in the next (Ferguson, 1987:118). As for the Romans, Ferguson (1987:127) says, “Most of the early Roman deities had no personality and are best characterized by the word *numen* (divine power or influence with no sense of person)”.

Some of the names of these deities were Jupiter, Juno, Venus, Minerva, etc. The Romans were not mainly concerned with the gods but with their actions. The Romans believed that the deities needed food and drink.

Let me close this religious discussion with a brief look at the Jewish belief. Machen (1994:33-37) gives a well-detailed report on this aspect. He says that Judea was at the time of Christ and of the earliest apostolic preaching governed by Roman procurators.

The religious life of the Palestinian Jews found expression in two institutions: in the Temple and in the Synagogue. The temple services took the form of the prescribed Old Testament (Luke 2:25-38). As for the Synagogue, it provided worship and especially instruction. Sacrifices took place in Jerusalem alone, where the trained experts in the Mosaic Law and oral interpretations and scribes were often heard. It was also in these Synagogues where Jesus sometimes taught. The Pharisees to which the scribes belonged were strict in their interpretations of the Mosaic Law and bitterly hostile to foreign influences. They had more real power for they had the people on their side. After looking at religion, I now go on to consider women, children and slaves.

The position of women, children and slaves also forms part of the socio-cultural aspect of the Hellenistic world. In all ancient Mediterranean societies women had limited legal standing and no political right. Papapoz (2004:2) narrates some of the ideas of Aristotle, the philosopher, who said that the friendship between a husband and wife, is comparable to that of a ruler and those ruled, the way the king looks to the welfare of his subject. In terms of roles, Campbell (1974:88) comments that apart from a mere gender-specific division of labor, society regarded the confinement of a woman inside the house as a social and ethical ideal; it befitted a woman to stay indoors because this way of life was more “beautiful” than any other. This attitude towards women is what

made Rabbi Judah say, “His house is a synonym for ‘his wife’,” and Rabbi Jose proudly said, “Never have I called my wife by that word, but ‘my home’.”

Even a woman’s body came to be perceived as constructed for homemaking (Spencer, 1985:52). As referred to by Spencer (1985:52), women who took part in public life were in danger of a charge of promiscuity, to the extent that Rabbi Eliezer declared, “If any man gives his daughter knowledge of the law it is as though he taught her lechery,” and Jesus ben Sirach as referred to by Spencer (1985:56) said, “Better a man’s wickedness than a woman’s goodness; it is woman who brings shame and disgrace”. Moxnes (1994:167-170) reports, “All societies have systems of prestige, and in all cultures we find notions about shame” (Luke 9:26; 1 Corinthians 1:26; 11:4-6; Rom 1:26).

So in the Mediterranean world it is regarded as important to uphold the divisions between the sexes and to maintain male control over women to such a degree that the man must be able to defend the chastity of the women under his dominance. The loss of their chastity implies shame for the family as a whole. Women are therefore looked upon as potential sources of shame. Schneider (1971:1-24) suggests that the origin of the ideal of female chastity and submission lies in the competition for scarce resources among kinship groups. Hence, the Mediterranean retains the relationship of honor and shame to masculinity, sexuality, and gender distinctions (Delaney, 1987:35-48; cf. Gilmore, 1987:2-21).

Spencer (1985:67) says, Jewish daily prayer reads, “Blessed be He who did not make me a Gentile; blessed be he who did not make me a woman; blessed be He who did not make me a slave or uneducated”. Papapoz (2004:3) says, women in the Greek society passed simply from the house of one master to the house of another. As a rule, women were subject to their fathers or husbands, and their domain was restricted to the house. In this context, respectable women were excluded from the “symposia”, the dinner and wine parties that formed the center of the social life of the citizens (Koester, 1994:62).

In Athenian law, women could not own property; women did not generally inherit anything in the presence of males. Women in the Greco-Roman world were supposed to occupy themselves with weaving in the confines of their house. A respectable

woman was not allowed to leave the house unless a trustworthy male escort accompanied her. Men kept their wives under lock and key; and women had the social status of a slave. Jewish women and girls were not allowed to go to school, and when they grew up they were not allowed to speak in public; even in the Synagogue service they were not allowed to study fully (Spencer, 1985:56). Greek poets equated women with evil; men viewed woman as responsible for unleashing evil into the world (Papapoz, 2004:2-3). With regards to household chores, Koester (1994:64) comments, “In actual practice, managing the daily household chores, supervising female slaves and educating the younger were the responsibilities of the wife, except in wealthier families, where the care of children was delegated to a nurse and a custodian (paidagogos).” Since a Grecian woman’s sphere of life was her family, her active life did not really begin until her marriage, so much so that in the Classical period, women looked forward to only two journeys: the first from their father’s house to their husbands, next from their husband’s house to the grave (Papapoz, 2004:3). The mindset of many was firmly anchored in paternalism, which was based on the presumption that men were more intelligent than women.

In the case of marriages, they were arranged by a woman’s father; husbands could divorce wives at will, whereas women had to go to court. Adultery was tolerated for men, but was grounds for divorce in the case of women (Guisepi, 1998, para.13-14)⁸⁵.

The status of Roman women was also very low, says Papapoz (2004:3), because Roman law placed a wife under the absolute control of her husband who had ownership of her and her possessions. He could divorce her if she went out in public without a veil; and he had the power of life and death over his wife. Both Romans and Greeks did not allow women to speak in public and no body blamed the Roman for the seclusion of women, since they already looked on their women as “emancipated.”

Ferguson (1987:58) says, “Never, while their men survive is feminine subjection shaken off; and they themselves abhor the freedom which the loss of husbands and fathers’ produce.” Women’s most important purpose in life was procreation, hence, marital fertility was of great importance in the Roman world; and they closely related

⁸⁵ No page number is given.

legitimate marriage with procreation. Hence, Malina and Neyrey (1996:178) assert that Ancient gender division rests upon an elaborate set of tasks and functions that are likewise gender specific: public, outdoor tasks for males; and private, indoor tasks for females. Roman morals were much stricter for women than for men.

As for the Jewish women, social status was shaped by both the prevalent culture of the ruling empire and the religious norms and expectations. Papapoz (2004:5) asserts that family was of utmost importance for the Hebrew women; to such an extent that at the age of twelve, Jewish girls were given in marriage. In the rabbinic ideal, women were not to be found in the market place, where the risk to their chastity was considered enormous. The Jewish woman were not qualified to appear as a witness in court; and were also exempt from fulfilling religious duties because her first duty was to her children and the home and she might not be in the required state of ritual purity (Ferguson, 1987:58).

Jewish women were looked upon as inferior and the rabbinic oral law was explicit: “He who talks with a woman in public brings evil upon himself,” “Let words of the Law (Torah) be burned rather than taught to women” (Papapoz, 2004:6-7). In Jewish law a woman was not a person, but a ‘thing’.

In the case of children, the Hellenistic world had too many mouths to feed since the household was comprised of the master of the house, his wife, children, aging parents, unmarried relatives, servants and slaves (Koester, 1994:64). As a result of this, to have a one-child family was most common in Greece; families with four or five children were very rare. There was a desire for two sons, in case one should die or be killed; but seldom did families rear more than one daughter because they were considered an economic liability as a dowry had to be paid at her marriage (Ferguson, 1987:59).

Infanticide became an answer to overpopulation. Koester (1994:65) says that abortion was widely practiced and unwanted children were usually exposed. Ferguson (1987:59) explains further by saying that the unwanted child was simply left on the trash heap or in some isolated place to die. Sometimes slave traders would take the child to be reared into slavery; baby girls were often taken to be raised into prostitution. As for the debate on abortion and the question of when does a human life become a person entitled to protection by the law? The traditional Judeo-Christian

says at conception; while for the Greeks and Romans the newborn was not considered a part of the family until acknowledged as such by the father and received into the family in a religious ceremony. This means that they did not consider exposure as murder but the refusal to admit to society. Therefore, it was only Jewish law and Christians that prohibited abortion and exposure (Ferguson, 1987:59-60). Guisepi (1998:s.a.) further adds that families burdened with too many children sometimes put female infants to death.

Poor parents might arrange an adoption for their children to ensure them a career or give them a better chance of an inheritance, for adopted children were often better cared for than their physical offspring (Koester, 1994:65).

Besides these problems, Ferguson (1987:60) adds that miscarriages were common and infant mortality was high; thus, if a newborn survived infancy there was a good prospect of a long life. Life expectancy in the ancient world was much lower than in modern times largely because of this high infant mortality rate. The Romans told grim stories of men exercising their paternal powers to punish, disown or even execute wayward children (Koester, 1994:65). Moxnes (1994:170) reports that the head of the Christian community should be an honorable head of his own household, whose authority was accepted by his children. These explanations reveal that women have been disadvantaged from the very beginning.

The baby girl was more vulnerable to social injustices and brutal deaths simply because she was born a girl, something which is out of her and her mother's control. The next section is about slaves.

The slave trade was the buying and selling of human beings. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, slaves were offered for sale in large numbers and bought like any other goods because agriculture and industrial production depended on slave labor. This type of slave was introduced into Greece around the 6th century and to Rome in the 4th century (Koester, 1994:58). Most slaves of classical Greece were usually non-Greeks. Koester lists five ways of how people became slaves. The first was through wars, whereby all defeated people were taken as slaves. The second was through kidnapping people and selling them in slave markets. The third group was the children of slaves who remained the property of their masters, even if they were fathered by

the master. The fourth group consisted of abandoned children who were taken as slaves. The final group was that of people who sold themselves into slavery either for economic reasons to escape poverty or to obtain influential positions. As for the conditions, slaves were not deprived of all legal rights. For instance, in the Roman Empire slaves had the right to retain property; to appeal disputes with their masters with the local governor; were admitted as witnesses in court, but under torture. These rights were limited and some nominal. Slaves could be beaten by their masters or executed, but this act without just cause became a punishable crime (Koester, 1994:58).

The economic situation for these slaves depended upon their education, professional training and abilities. Some slaves worked in the house, some in large estates, while some in industries and in mines. The state owned mines and estates could appoint slaves to work as managers and supervisors. This helped them to acquire knowledge and skills that could help them after their eventual manumission.

Brook and Ringe (2002:12) wondered why slavery went unquestioned and unchallenged by most people in the Roman Empire. But Koester (1994:59) tells a different story in that in Greece the king did not favour slavery; as a result he tried to restrict it by imposing high taxes on slave owners. So only the king and a few wealthy citizens were rich enough to own slaves. The slaves as human beings expected to receive benefaction from their masters in a form of money or gifts, kindness, mercy and understanding. Failing to do so meant that masters risked being murdered by their slaves or losing respect from their friends. However, slaves were possessions and could be discarded if they became useless since their value depended on their dutiful service, not on their natural human dignity. Two factors led to the end of the slave trade, and these are: (1) Changes in the economic structures which made slavery too expensive. (2) The contribution of Christian and philosophical criticism. After being set free, their status of dependency did not end, but there were some benefits like: they would receive a real name and discard the insulting names, like Lucky (Felix), or Useful (Onesimus), or First or Second. If the master was a Roman citizen, his slaves would gain citizenship upon manumission. Freedmen and women had the right to marry (Koester, 1994:62).

The above section focused on how women, children and slaves were treated in the Hellenistic world. The focus here is on their ethos, namely, social life. Guisepi (1998) says that the social structure of classical Greece and the colonies around the Mediterranean were mainly agricultural; and had an aristocracy based on ownership of large estates and military service. Due to the fact that mainland Greece was so rocky and mountainous, many city states had to depend heavily on seagoing trade. As a result of frequent wars and colonization, they produced abundant opportunities to seize slaves. Koester (1994:64) says that households and family were the smallest functioning cells of society everywhere.

Both in the cities and in the rural areas, households were economically semi-independent units, which produced much of the necessary food and clothing. In the middle class and poorer families, fathers and mothers shared most of the responsibilities equally; while in the more affluent houses, masters and mistresses had little part in running the household and supervising their own children.

Hugscub (2005:1) says that the Hellenistic people were usually very tolerant of outsiders and had more contact with diverse cultures and practices with them. In terms of privacy, there was very little private life for a Greek or Roman because there was constant contact with slaves, friends, relatives, visitors and clients. Koester (1994:65) says that a husband and wife might even have trouble finding a place for private sex because a slave girl normally slept in her mistress's room.

I will close this social-cultural aspect with the reaction of the Christians who found themselves within this type of culture, where the worshipping of gods and the emperor was part of the norm; therefore, Christians were expected to show loyalty. Brook and Ringe (2002:8) talk about the movements of Jesus' followers that emerged in Galilee, Jerusalem and in Palestine, which developed and expanded the period of deepening conflict between the rulers and ruled in 66-70 AD. These Jesus movements sought a divinely inspired renewal of Israel led by a prophet like Moses, Joshua or Elijah over against the temple, the high priesthood, the Herodian rulers and their Roman imperial patrons. And so they developed and performed the speeches and sayings of Jesus.

Apostles and followers of Jesus based in Jerusalem, like Saul of Tarsus, took the gospel beyond Palestine and Antioch, which was by this time the center of Roman

political-military power in the East. Coincidentally, Antioch also became the base from which Peter, Paul, Barnabas and others spread the gospel (Acts 11:31). It was for this reason that the name Christians was first applied to Jesus-believers in Antioch (Acts 11:26).

The disciples of Jesus Christ were not happy with the worshipping of the Emperor and the imperial gods, because the God of these Christians could not be worshipped along with others. This led to the irreconcilable conflict between Christianity and the religion of the Roman state. Disloyalty to the empirical gods was regarded as disloyalty to the empire itself and their refusal to unite with the worship of other people caused them to be regarded as enemies of the human race (Machen, 1976:24).

The end result was the persecution of the church which saw several Christians tortured and killed including Paul. This action failed to stop Christians from resisting the worshipping of the Roman gods; they became so stubborn that it was difficult to coerce them (Machen, 1976:25). So far, this was what the socio-cultural aspect of Hellenistic world was all about. Our next step is the theological-rhetorical aspect, which also happens to be the last part of the re-reading of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

6.2.3. Theological-rhetorical aspects of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

The exploration of literary and historical aspects of 1 Corinthians 14 paved the way for exploring a subsequent question: “What does this text say in particular in view of its literary and historical background?”, Here, one would ask questions such as, “In this world that you have pictured with regards to a historical analysis, what effect were these words supposed to have in that context?” “What did God want them to do in that situation?” “How were they to reflect on God’s ethos, way of thinking, speaking and acting?” The theological-rhetorical aspects of interpreting the Bible are important for this study, because they particularly deal with the pragmatic task identified by Osmer (2008:4). This is where you determine strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable. It is meant to bring about change. This is what the following section will be about.

The interpretation of these verses has left women in the past and even in the present being sidelined from taking up leadership roles in the church and exempted or debarred from preaching from the pulpit. God has been pictured as a patriarchal

supporter, opposed to the matriarchal. First Corinthians 14 mainly fall within the wider context of Chapter 12-14.

In actual sense, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 not only contradicts Chapter 11:5 where women were exercising their acknowledged right to pray and prophesy (Mouton, 2011:280), but also seems to run counter to other New Testament accounts of women prophesying as a mark of the new age (Acts 2:17-18). Due to the patriarchal type of interpretation, women have been silenced and marginalized in numerous explicit and subtle ways. In the process, Mouton (2011:281) says, the spiritual gifts of baptized members of the body of Christ, as representatives of God's dynamic presence in the world, were tragically inhibited.

I personally feel there is a misrepresentation in 1 Corinthians 14. I am of the view that this passage has to do with the identity of God and the church. So according to the rhetorical context of 1 Corinthians, the identity of God comes out vividly, such that Paul's grounds for his argument for unity is that the identity of God who is to be imitated is not of disorder but of peace (verse 33).

So this profound theological statement simultaneously serves as a hinge towards the final part of Chapter 14:33b-40, which is concluded by an appeal to orderly behavior (Mouton, 2011:282). Mitchell (1991:171-175) is of the view that 1 Corinthians 14:33 contains an implicit appeal to the audience to turn from faction and instability toward peace and unity, in imitation of the God of peace. The church is therefore called to emulate the God of peace by being themselves at peace with one another so that the church may be strengthened (1 Corinthians 14:26). Fraser (1960:33) says, "The only way we can serve God is by being people who love peace, and are eager to have it." Further, the church is called to be united, but this unity can only be achieved through love. The church needs to understand how Christianity works that we are all equal before God (Gal 3:26-29). Coogan (2011:145) says, without love spiritual gifts bring no benefit to the individual or the community; they accomplish nothing for the common good. So it is from such a theological-rhetorical framework that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 occurs. God being the God of peace and not of disorder, He calls for an orderly church where there are no divisions, no disruption when the preaching is in progress and no competition. Kroeger and Evans (2002:662) comment on this by saying, "God is a God of order rather than of confusion and that all things must be

done decently and in order.” Therefore, Christians today are called everywhere to grasp the meaning and rhetorical effect of “order” and “peace” in their church services. So far, this was the re-reading of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. I now move on to the re-reading of 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

6.3. 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-12

6.3.1. Literary aspects

First Timothy 2:11-12 is located within the broader literary structure of the letter of 1 Timothy. Therefore, as much as I will concentrate on verses 11-12, I will also take the broader context into consideration. First Timothy is one of the letters that is referred to as the “Pastoral Epistles.” It includes 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

First Timothy 2:11-12, according to Johnson (2001:42-54), is a canonical text that resists being read liberally. It has, probably especially since the nineteenth century, been one of the most controversial texts from within the history of biblical interpretation relating to the participation of women in church leadership and decision-making processes. It is the most discussed passage in the Pastoral Epistle today and interpretations range from seeing Paul as a liberator and champion of women’s rights, to dismissing Paul as wrong and irrelevant in today’s culture (Mounce, 2000:103). What follows now is positioning of the passage of 1 Timothy 2:11-12, within its immediate literary context.

Verse 3 of Chapter 1 defines the commission given to Timothy from the apostle Paul, namely, “To charge/command certain men not to teach false doctrines----”. The verb translated “charge” as a military term meaning “give strict order” (Kelly, 1963:43). This charge was to proclaim the pure gospel, unlike false doctrines (v.3-11); the gospel of the glory of the blessed God (v.11).

The ultimate object of Paul’s charge is to establish “love” in the Ephesian congregation, in place of the spirit of contentiousness that has been sown there (Kelly, 1963:46). Yet this love, as described by Paul, is no mere passing emotion; it must have its source and its spring “in a pure heart”, that is free from all unholy desires and evil motives; it must come from a “good conscience”, that has been delivered from the sense of guilt; above all, it must have its origin in “faith unfeigned”, a faith which is no empty profession, no simple easy assent to formulas, but a vital principle uniting

one to a living Christ, and manifested in a life according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God (Erdman, 1929:24).

There is a powerful link between verses 12-17 with what precedes, because Paul's reference in v.11, "to the gospel with which I have been entrusted", prompts him to recall, with amazement and gratitude, his experience of God's superabundant grace. "Grace" is defined as God's undeserved favor towards sinful men (Rom 5:20). This divine grace brought with it "faith" to replace Paul's previous unbelief; and "love" instead of the brutal aggressiveness he had displayed to those who should have been his brothers (Kelly, 1963:53). The phrase "with faith and love," indicates the effect of grace in Paul's heart and life. Grace kindles faith and love. The apostle is fond of this combination (1 Thessalonians 1:3 and 5:8). This faith and love are "in Christ Jesus", that is, they are centered in Him, and Paul possesses them because of his mystic union with Christ the savior (Hendriksen, 1957:75).

In Chapter 2, the two main sentences are introduced by "I urge" and "I want" (see 1 Tim 2:1, 8; NIV) respectively. The pronoun "I" links what comes as a direct and logical consequence to the preceding section and purpose for writing (1:3-7, 15) and as an explication of the glorious and truthful gospel of God and Jesus Christ (1:11-17).

Paul's chief concern is that intercession should be "all men"; this is confirmed by his emphatic reminder in v.4 and v.6 that God wants "all men" to be saved and that Christ gave Himself as a ransom for "all men". So we have this phrase occurring three times in Chapter two only.

1 Timothy 2:8 acknowledges the apostle's desire that men everywhere should lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. The lifting up of the hands was a familiar and significant attitude in prayer in antiquity for pagans, Jews and Christians; they were to stand with hands outstretched and uplifted, the palms turned upwards (Kelly, 1963:66, cf. Erdman, 1929:34). The term has a ritual meaning in Judaism but here (as in Psalm 24:3-4) has a moral meaning, that is without anger or quarreling (Hultgren, 1984:66). Therefore, Paul is not insisting upon a posture of the body but upon a state of the heart that those who pray are to be free from sin and yielded to the service of God (Erdman, 1929:34) because true worship of God can take place only

when those who participate are at peace with each other (Matt 5:23-24, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

Just as men, I also want women to pray (v.9). The recurring of “I want men” and “I want women” communicates a sense of mutuality, partnership and interconnectedness among the members of the community (Mouton and Van Wolde, 2012:587). So verses 9-10 are the continuation of the exhortation concerning public worship, but this time speaking to and about women; they are to conduct themselves by dressing modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes. The insistence that women dress modestly and perform good deeds is common among both Greco-Roman and Jewish moralists (Keener, 1992:103-107). They were not to attract attention to themselves by excessive ornaments and striking costumes, but rather to be conspicuous for their goodness and grace (Erdman, 1929:35). Verse 9 also indicates that there were also women who were very rich and also educated, hence prime targets for the greedy false teachers (Osiek, 2005:212; cf. Mounce, 2000:111). So Paul’s central concern moves beyond appearances to behavior; it appears that women were dressing immodestly to the point that it was causing disruption. Therefore Paul says they are to dress in a way that is in keeping with their Christian character (Mounce, 2000:109).

V.11 “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission”. Paul here shifts from the disruption caused by women’s clothing (v. 9-10) to the larger question of leadership. The issue of leadership is a central concern in the pastoral Epistle since the opposition to Timothy is coming from the Ephesian leaders and the topic continues to Chapter 3.

V.11a is the main point and is repeated in 12c for emphasis, “in full submission;” v. 11b defines quietness. There is a positive emphasis in the first clause: that a woman should learn (v.11a). This a radical movement from within the cultural context of Judaism where men were the public speakers in any assembly, and where it was forbidden that women should learn and interpret the Torah (Johnson, 2001:201). It asserts the ability and value of women education. There is a repetition of the word “quietness” (v.11 and 12) which in the socio-rhetorical context of 1 Timothy would have represented a respectful, honourable attitude for proper learning, spiritual contemplation and receptivity (Mouton and Van Wolde, 2012:588).

V.12 continues, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.” It is only here in the New Testament that women are commanded to be quiet. This probably has to do with the crucial issue that is tackled throughout 1 Timothy, namely, the false teaching that affected the Christian church in Ephesus. In the specific context of 1 Timothy the call could have been directed “against women involved in false teachings who have abused proper exercise of authority in the church” (Scholer, 2003:109). The silencing of women here could also have been due to the fact that women were not yet instructed because of their social-cultural background. This is why they are commanded to learn first here.

After looking at literary aspects of 1 Timothy 2:11-12; I now proceed to socio-cultural aspects relevant to the text.

6.3.2. Socio-cultural aspects

As stated earlier regarding literary aspects, 1 Timothy is one of three letters which bear a common title, namely, “Pastoral Epistles,” even though Timothy and Titus were not “pastors” in the usual, present-day sense of the term. They were not ministers of local congregations but were Paul’s special convoys or deputies sent by him on specific missions. They were called “pastoral” because of their content and by the way of eminence; they are addressed to chief pastors and are largely concerned with their duties (Hendriksen, 1957:4; cf. Kelly, 1963:1). This prescribed title distinguishes these letters from other letters like James and 1 John, which were written to Christians in general; or from Philippians and Colossians, which were addressed to certain churches; or from strictly personal communications such as Philemon. These letters were directed to men who were in charge of Christian congregations; they contain many personal elements, yet they are essentially of an official character and designed to guide pastors in their care of churches (Erdman, 1929:9).

These Pastoral Epistles were written by Paul (in the last year of his life), an apostle of Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 1; 1:11) and a servant of God (Titus 1:1). Erdman (1929:19) has defined the term “apostle,” as one who has been sent. The letters were ostensibly written to Timothy and Titus; but nevertheless, it is clear that they are addressed to a congregation or congregations for in fact the writer ‘talks past’ Timothy and Titus to a broader audience (1 Tim 6:1, 2:8-11; 3:12; 5:3-8, 14-16; Titus 3:14).

Even sections that have to do with qualifications for congregational leaders (1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:9-13; Titus 1:5-9), while they appear to be instructions given by Paul to Timothy and Titus, are actually regulations for the communities themselves (Hultgren, 1984:1920).

In terms of the date of these pastoral letters, some say they were written probably about 100 A.D. (Hultgren, 1984:29); while others just estimate somewhere around the first century, before 110 A.D. (Kelly, 1963:27). This means, it was between his release from his first Roman imprisonment and his execution.

After looking at the Pastoral Epistle as a whole, I now turn to the specific letter I am studying, namely, 1 Timothy, although this will also randomly affect 2 Timothy as the recipient is the same. The name Timothy means honoring or worshipping god, originally a heathen name of very common occurrence but it was adopted by Jews and Christians with changed reference, namely, “to their God (Hendriksen, 1957:33-34). He was one of the best known minor characters of the New Testament (Kelly, 1963:1); an offspring of a “mixed marriage”; a Greek pagan father and a devout Jewish mother, Eunice (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim 1:5); who from his childhood had been instructed in the sacred writings of the Old Testament (2 Timothy 3:15). According to Acts 16:1, Timothy came from Lystra (cf. Acts 20:4). He was converted to Christianity after Paul had preached in the locality. Thereafter, Paul regarded him as his fellow-worker, his beloved and faithful child of the Lord (Rom 16:21; 1 Corinthians 4:17). But having a Greek father, Timothy had to be circumcised so as to have influence among the Jews; and as a clear indication of his own devotion to the sacred writings of the covenant people (Acts 16:3). At the time that Paul was writing this Epistle of 1 Timothy, the recipient was in the town called Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3), where he was entrusted with the most challenging task he had ever been given, the task of re-establishing the sound doctrines of the Christian teachings in the face of divisive heretical tendencies. This also marks the purpose of this epistle. Timothy was at this time still relatively young (1 Tim 14:12; 2 Tim 2:22), perhaps in his middle or late thirties (Kelly, 1963:2).

After looking at the author, recipient, date and the purpose of the epistle, I now take a brief look at the social-cultural background, since 1 Timothy shares almost the same background with what has already been discussed in 1 Corinthians. The whole account of its culture is mainly given by Hursley (2002:4-7) who says that the Roman warlords

expanded their empire into the eastern Mediterranean two generations before Jesus; and then consolidated their “ecumenical” domination during the lifetime of Jesus and Paul.

In contrast to most who were subjected to the Romans, the Judeans and Galileans resisted their initial conquest. This resulted in several villages being destroyed, people being slaughtered, and tens of thousands of the younger and able-bodied being sold as slaves in Rome and Italy. For example, around the time that Jesus was born in Nazareth, the Romans had burned the houses and enslaved thousands of people in response to a widespread popular revolt in 4 B.C. Herod also did his best to impose heavy taxation on the productive peasantry in order to support his own lavish lifestyle and his massive development projects of public buildings, monuments, temples and even whole cities constructed and named in honor of the Emperor, Augustus. He built a massive temple complex in a grand Roman-Hellenistic style, which became one of the ancient wonders of the world. Brook and Ringe (2002:4) say that after the death of Herod in 4 B.C., Ceasar Augustus appointed his son Antipas as ruler of Galilee and Perea, who within the period of 20 years built the completely new city of Tiberias. This had a negative effect economically on the Galileans who were already desperate due to their previous multiple demands for tithes to the temple, tribute to the Romans and taxes to Herod. Hence, peasants throughout Roman dominated Palestine could no longer make a living on their land, families and village communities; and so the fundamental forms of Israelite society were beginning to disintegrate from hunger and heavy indebtedness. These were precisely the problems Jesus addressed in His preaching when He attempted to renew family and village communities (Luke 6:20-49; 12:22-31; Mark 10:2-31). Even with this terrible situation, says Hursley (2002:4-5), the peasants were still required to render tribute to Ceasar, as well as tithes and offerings and other taxes to the temple and the priests.

These taxes led to the surplus of wealth piling up in the temple, which also served as a bank under the control of the high priestly family, enterprising aristocratic priests and descendants of the Herodian family.

The discontent and social disintegration that resulted from the oppressive structures imposed by the Romans and the exploitative, political-economic practices of the multiple layers of Roman rulers, Herodian and high priests provided the conditions

for periodic protests, renewal movements and even massive popular revolts for over a century, from the imposition of Roman rule and Herod the Great to the great revolt of 66-70 C.E. These economic hiccups also led to a “harvest of Banditry,” because peasants could not both meet the demands for the tribute and taxes; and feed their families (Hursley, 2002:7). So the brutal Roman devastation and the enslavement of the people left the surviving inhabitants of the area in deep social-spiritual trauma for generations (Hursley, 2002:7). With regards to the issue of women, children, slaves and religion, please see 6.1.2. Let me close this part with a brief history of the city of Ephesus.

Ephesus was one of the most important capital cities of the ancient world. Through it surged great tides of travel and commerce; in it were influential representatives of all the schools of Greek and Oriental philosophy, as well as all forms of pagan religion. Erdman (1929:16-17) reports that it was the seat of worship for the great goddess Diana, whose temple just outside the city attracted vast multitudes of pilgrims and brought the city both fame and wealth. In addition to these heathen influences, the Ephesian Christians were also subjected to strong currents of Jewish thought and teaching.

After discussing the socio-cultural background, I now move on to theological-rhetorical aspects of 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

6.3.3. Theological-rhetorical aspects of 1 Timothy 2:11-12

The Pastoral Epistles are comprised of 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. They are believed to have been written to two most trusted people, Timothy and Titus. They were given the title “pastoral” since the early eighteenth century, because they were addressed to chief pastors of faith communities in Asia Minor. According to 1 Timothy 1:3, the epistle was written to Timothy while he was in Ephesus and Paul was on his journey to Macedonia.

The urgent need which prompted the author to write this Epistle of 1 Timothy was Paul’s concern of maintaining the sound doctrine and ethos of the Christian faith, which appears to have been endangered by prevalent forms of false teachings (Erdman, 1929:11; cf. Mouton and Wolde, 2012:586). The exact character of these heresies cannot be determined. On the one hand, the author was concerned that the

congregation had divorced doctrine from behavior, paving the way for licentiousness and greed; they had succumbed to the teaching of demons. This explains the author's insistence for Timothy to simply put a stop to what the false teachers were doing (Mounce, 2000: lvii-viii). On the other hand, believers are exhorted not to deviate from their focus on God and Christ (1:17; 2:3-6; 4:16) by avoiding any argument or disposition that could result in divisive quarrels and consequent loss of their moral discernment and integrity (Mouton and Van Wolde, 2012:587). Hendriksen indicates the essence of the charge which Timothy must deliver to the churches of Ephesus and in the vicinity, namely, "love which springs from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a faith without hypocrisy (Hendricksen, 1957:88).

God in this epistle is depicted as the God of mercy, love and patience; and whose grace is manifested through Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim 1:13-16; cf. Luke 19:10, John 3:16). Here, "Paul declares the glorious purpose of Christ's coming; this is the theme of the marvelous declaration which may be regarded as the very core of the gospel, the very purpose and end of the incarnation" (Hendricksen, 1957:76; Erdman, 1929:26) and thus salvation.

The epistle further depicts God as eternal, and as such, imperishable, the King of all Ages. His dominion endures throughout all generations (1 Tim 1:17; cf. Psalms 145:13). The apostle also tackles a very sensitive, but at the same time very important issue to be expounded on at this time, namely, "there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Within these words lies a wealth of Christological affirmations against gnostic systems in which there are many angelic intermediaries. With this great affirmation, "There is no place even for the mediation of saints. Jesus Christ is the one and only Being through whom we have access to God; He truly represents God to man and man to God for He gave Himself on the cross as a ransom for all" (Hultgren, 1984:65; Erdman, 1929:32 and Kelly, 1963:63).

Therefore, because of who God is (1 Timothy 2:2-4), the church is called to engage in a ceaseless prayer for all people including rulers (1 Tim 2:1-2; cf. Jeremiah 29:7; Ezra 6:10), so that peace may abound and people be saved (1 Tim 2:2-4). These intercessions should be unselfish, never to be limited to personal interests; instead it should reach toward the whole human race. Because of who God is, the church is called to live in godliness and holiness (1 Tim 2:2, 6:11; cf. 1 Peter 1:15-16). Still,

because of who God is, the church is advised to ensure that proper conduct in the worship assembly is observed (1 Tim 2:8-15) bearing in mind the distortion and misunderstanding brought in by false teachings. It is also the duty of the church to proclaim to everyone this universal salvation for it is God's desire that all men should be saved (1 Tim 2:4, 4:13-14; 2 Tim 4:1-2). It is therefore from this theological-rhetorical vision that 1 Timothy 2:11-12 should be explored.

6.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter was on the re-reading of the two texts, 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. After going through the interpretation of these texts by the Nkhoma Synod and people from other parts of the world (chapters two and four), one thing that vividly stood out for me was the problem of reading these texts literally, from one dimension only, as if the Bible existed in a vacuum without a historical and socio-cultural context. The research results in chapter five confirmed the findings of the previous chapters. The decision was then made to re-read these texts from a multi-dimensional point of view.

This involved accounting for literary, socio-cultural and theological-rhetorical aspects of both 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. For me, this approach has been an eye opener to the realities of these texts. For example, during exploring the literary aspects, I was able to see how some words, sentences, paragraphs and chapters are used; what they mean and how they fit not only within the immediate context but also from a wider context. Doing a social-cultural analysis of a text is another tool which has helped me to unpack the surrounding circumstances of these texts – their culture, religion, political and economic situation; how they perceived women, children, slaves, and etcetera. All these have helped me to better understand what was going on when the writer wrote these letters.

Finally, I looked at the theological-rhetorical aspects of the two texts. It is here where one determines the effect the text was supposed to have on its recipients. Denying these rich aspects is calling upon oneself the danger of falling into a trap of wrong or biased interpretation. This approach helps one to see that these texts are inclusive, and not exclusive, of women. They are to be appreciated as negotiating and expressing the identity of the church under specific socio-cultural circumstances. Where the aspect

of love is dominant, it bears the fruit of unity in the long run, and not division, so that the body of Christ is built up as the final goal of the church.

This chapter (on the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12) was meant to give a clearer picture of how the Scriptures could be interpreted. This information, together with the results from the findings of the research, encouraged me to develop a theory which is aimed at helping to rectify the problems as identified in the research, but also in the theory of Social Identity. It is riveting to know that the theory which I am about to suggest happens to be the same one which I have used in the previous chapter to explain the way of interpreting the Word of God. I now move on to chapter seven, where this multi-dimensional theory will be expounded.

CHAPTER 7: TOWARDS A NEW APPROACH OF UNDERSTANDING HISTORY, CULTURE, AND THE BIBLE IN THE CCAP NKHOMA SYNOD

7.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is not to criticize and blame the CCAP Nkhoma Synod and its first missionaries, but constructively to suggest a way of overcoming the long time problem of women leadership. According to chapter one, it seems this problem has been in existence as far back as 1889, when Christianity was first introduced in the Central Region of Malawi, where Nkhoma Synod is situated. Therefore, the main focus of this chapter is to develop a new theological hermeneutical approach that will be able to address the biblical, historical and cultural issues that so far have been used in frustrating and hinging women from attaining leadership roles. In this chapter, I propose a “theory” for re-reading the Bible, culture and history as a possible solution to the above mentioned problems. It is meant to be a theory that would be life-giving, that is healing and problem-solving. In the final analysis, it will have to be truthful to the everyday realities of people. To flee from reality would be senseless, cruel (because one is time and again disillusioned by reality), and miserable (because one does not learn to enjoy this reality) (Rousseau, 1986:56). This exercise is similar to what Osmer (2008:4, 175-218) calls the pragmatic task. It asks, “How might we respond?” The purpose is to propose some form of alternative praxis as an answer to the initial research question.

It will be argued in this chapter of the dissertation that such a theory has to involve a multidimensional reading of the Bible, giving account of its literary, socio-cultural and rhetorical-theological aspects, while considering the aspects of liberation, salvation and praxis as suggested by Ackermann. All these components are essential to the interpretation of Scripture; and therefore useful tools for the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

Before fully examining the content of this ‘re-reading method’ of Bible, culture and history, I will first make some preliminary remarks briefly to summarize the limitations of a one-dimensional method of interpretation. I will also briefly discuss some short falls of the current Chewa culture and the limitations of the past missionary history.

Thereafter, I will proceed to defining a multidimensional method through these three elements. Finally, since the goal of the re-reading theory lies in the transformation of the life of God's people, I will summarize the characteristics of the multi-dimensional theory in the light of the above discussion.

7.2. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

7.2.1. Limitations of a one-dimensional method

One-dimensional or exclusive interpretation, as called by Jonker (1993:14), "is not just an acknowledgment of a unique set of presuppositions, rather it is the claim that this unique set of presuppositions constitutes the only correct one". Jonker (1993:15) adds that this method develops when the exegete claims (consciously or unconsciously) that this specialization is the only key to the correct exegesis of a text. I want to agree with Jonker, in that this is what has been the main problem in the Nkhoma Synod, those who are against women leadership have maintained the literal translation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. The sad part of it is that they strongly believe that their interpretation is the only correct one. Therefore, any other methods are regarded as false teachings, hence unbiblical. They do forget that biblical study is no longer conducted under the one-dimensional/exclusive or even dominant hegemony of one discipline, but studied through a multitude of disciplines that are mutually interacting with one another (Crossan, 1982:201).

Another crisis of the one-dimensional method, which some members of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod have taken, is that it refuses to accept the reality that any text (including a biblical text) is written within a certain socio-cultural context. This means that it is inadequate to interpret the message without putting into consideration its historical context, as if the Bible existed in a vacuum. The end result will be fundamentalism or uninformed pietism (Schneiders, 1981:37). This approach, says Boorer (1989:195), boils down to a retrenchment in the interpretation of the text. Therefore, a one-dimensional message risks the danger of preaching out of context. This is exactly what is happening in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. First Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 has been and is being preached out of context and the end result is what we are seeing now, that women are discouraged and banned from attaining leadership roles.

This means that to emphasize only the one-dimension of the biblical text, to the detriment of other equally important dimensions, has led to a one-sided and insufficient attempt to interpret the Bible (Rousseau, 1988:33; cf. Jonker, 1993:33).

Complementing what Crossan and Boorer have said, Rousseau (1986:92) argues that the church and its officials are trying to exert control over society with the Bible as a normative conscience-binding instrument. His concern, which also happens to be my concern, is that when the church binds the consciences of society and of its own members in such a conflicting way, the question arises whether it has not become an irrelevant and meaningless instrument creating disorder and confusion? Rousseau regards a one-mode approach to be the result of lacking a comprehensive exegetical-hermeneutical model. In the case of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, the inevitable result of a one-dimensional or one-mode approach, according to Rousseau, is the overexposure of some textual elements (while underexposing others), which constitutes imbalance and neglect of the basic modes of the New Testament.

Theologically, says Rousseau (1986:93), this means that the true nature, message and intention of the New Testament are ignored. Historically, it would imply that the historical background of the text is ignored, leading to the belief that the writings fell from heaven containing timeless truths, which are directly applicable to people of all ages and places. Literarily, the underexposure of a text will lead to a verbal inspiration theory. So the solution beyond this problem is the re-reading of these texts through a multi-dimensional approach. After discussing the limitations of the one-dimensional approach, I now want to look at the limitations of the Chewa culture.

7.2.2. Limitations of the current Chewa culture

In addition to the one-dimensional approach, the literature review and research results have shown that the current Chewa culture has also contributed towards the problem of the lack of women leadership. Culture has a very big impact on the lives of people. As such, people will always operate within its norms. We saw in chapter two how the Chewa women in the Central Region where the Nkhoma Synod is situated lost their first glory of leadership. This lost glory has in a way also affected their position in the church. Women lost their powers to men through the slave trade, as well as the arrival of patriarchal tribes and missionaries who introduced Christianity as a male led religion. Since then, women have been told to be quiet and submissive in the church.

After pushing for more than forty years for women leadership, the green light was given in 2007 and 2009, when women were allowed to preach and become elders, respectively. Since this decision was made without first changing the culture, the problem of women leadership has re-surfaced, as has been confirmed by this research. “This is not our culture,” has been the complaint voiced by many of the reverends and male elders.

The results of the research have shown that the Nkhoma Synod is operating within the norms of the culture, which expects women to be weak vessels, submissive, indecisive, listeners only and servants. This type of culture inhibits and limits women from becoming leaders, not only in the community but also in the church. I therefore suggest not only a re-reading of the Bible, but also a re-reading of the culture as a means of overcoming this hindrance to women leadership.

7.2.3. Limitations of the past history

As indicated in chapter one of this dissertation, that the first missionaries from the Dutch Reformed Church portrayed Christianity as a male religion; but also the Social Identity Theory which explored the consequences of stereotyping and self-categorization in chapter three; and through the research carried out in chapter four, it is clear that this past history is a very huge stronghold. This stronghold still has an impact on the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, with regards to how they interpret passages relating to women, especially that of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. People’s minds are still set on past ideologies concerning women from around the time of 1889, in which they were excluded from any form of leadership role. I will therefore in this paper try to come up with a re-reading system of history, in which I will first follow-up on the current history of our first missionaries and see if they are still holding on to their first theologies, or else they have changed as they have been reformed.

After looking at the limitations of the one-dimensional system of reading the text, culture and history; I now go on to the re-reading of these aspects: texts, culture and history.

7.3. RE-READING OF BIBLLICAL TEXTS, CULTURE AND HISTORY

7.3.1. Toward re-reading Biblical texts through multi-dimensional method

In order to clearly understand a multi-dimensional method, I will briefly discuss the theory of Jonker and Gerald West who adhere to this new direction. I too, personally adhere to this theory because it avoids the risks of either overexposing or underexposing the text. I will start with Jonker (1993:18) who begins by formulating a hypothesis: “A multi-dimensional theory is necessary to evade the dangers posed by a variety of exclusivity in exegetical praxis.” After defining the hypothesis, he proceeds by defining the method. He says, “It is the interrelation among exegetical methodologies in a systematic and ordered way” (Jonker, 1993:45). He says,

With the multidimensional approach, every methodology is allowed to operate according to its own approach and by means of its own method(s); instead of operating exclusively and on its own, the exegetical process and results are being coordinated and related to those of other approaches and methods. This means that with the multidimensional method, one has the opportunity of making exegetical decisions in a more responsible way. Not only one view to the biblical text (as is the case with mono-dimensional exegesis) that will be taken into consideration, but various views will benefit her/his position as the exegete (Jonker, 1993:45).

From the above hypothesis and definition, Jonker (1993:30) believes that the aim of a multi-dimensional exegetical methodology should thus be to produce legitimate and valid readings of the text. I now go on to discuss the second contribution from West (1995).

Gerald West is a senior lecturer at the School of Theology, at the University of Kwazulu Natal and he is writing from a purely South African perspective; it is a South African voice. In fact we share the same ethos in that the ultimate objective of his calling for a re-reading of the Word in South Africa is to see the oppressed being liberated. He therefore asserts “liberation” to be at the center of the whole gospel. This declaration was also declared in chapter one by Ackerman who said that “liberation” is at the very heart of the Christian gospel (1.9.1). West starts his argument by quoting the second edition of The Kairos Document, which says, “The social-political crisis impels us to return to the Bible and search the Word of God for a message that is relevant to what we are experiencing in South Africa today” (1991:47).

West (1991:47) says implicitly that calling a “return to the Bible,” is the recognition that a crucial part of the South African crisis is an “interpretive crisis”. West sees the struggle against apartheid as a vital resource for their return to their “re-reading” of the Bible with the consideration of justice, democracy, reconstruction and development. In other words, the cry of the poor and oppressed to re-read the Bible arises out of their recognition of the Bible as both the solution and the liberator. It is amazing to see that what West is addressing here (interpretive crisis) is exactly what the literature study (chapters one, two, and four) and the research results (chapter five) also discovered to be a crucial part of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod crisis, with regards to the struggle against women in leadership roles. It is also an “interpretive crisis”. It is to address this crisis that the researcher is suggesting a re-reading approach to the two texts of 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

Among the many ways West talks of re-reading the Bible, I chose two of them, which are in line with this study. The first one is the historical-cultural aspects. He says that these aspects are very important especially because they attempt to develop a biblical hermeneutics of liberation, since they arise from an understanding that people’s reading of the Bible is framed by their history. This means that for one to become a weapon of struggle for the oppressed, she/he needs to relocate her/himself within the historical and cultural struggles of these people (West, 1995:57-58). In such a case, West (1991:60) adheres that the focus of the historical-cultural aspects lies “behind the text,” which holds the historical background of the text one is studying. West (1991:61-62) confesses that the only set back with regards to the historical-cultural aspects, is that they do not always allow the text to speak to people today. It is for this reason that it is vital to put into consideration his second aspects of re-reading the Word of God. This is called, the “literary aspects”.

According to West (1995:60) the focus of the literary aspects is on ‘the text’; it is when the text of the Bible speaks to practical issues of life. It is here that one analyzes the meaning of the words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. You put into consideration the repetition of words or phrases so as to have a clear understanding of the text.

Besides explaining the relevance of re-reading the Word of God through the multi-dimensional method of historical-cultural and literary aspects, West (1991:109) also unveils the danger of a one-dimensional method. He says, “We are in error to

absolutize anything that denies the thrust of the entire Bible toward individual wholeness and harmonious community, toward oneness in Christ”. In other words, what he is saying is that instead of citing isolated biblical texts, the interpreters must interpret the biblical message as whole, which calls for a multi-dimensional approach.

In short, what West is trying to convey in his book is the liberation and salvation of the poor, oppressed and marginalized. His assurance of this liberation is based on the fact that the central message of the whole Bible is “liberation”. God, throughout the Bible, appears as the liberator and saviour of the oppressed (Kairos Document, 1985)⁸⁶ (See also Exodus 3:7-9; Psalm 103:6 and Luke 4:18-19). He affirms that this liberation cannot take place until a “re-reading” of the Word of God has taken place.

As indicated earlier, the contribution of West was chosen based on the criteria that it is addressing the same problem that this dissertation is also addressing, namely, the oppression of the poor, marginalized and underprivileged, of which women are considered to be the ‘oppressed of the oppressed’. The 1984 Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) recognized that male black theologians cannot sincerely and genuinely talk of liberation from oppression, while they continue to oppress their female partners. So, just as the black South Africans struggled for liberation from the oppressive rule of the white government, so the women of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod are struggling for liberation from the oppressive structures and beliefs of the patriarchal systems which have been sidelining them from leadership roles. In the same manner that the Black theology⁸⁷ called for the re-reading of the Word of God so that liberation could take place, so I propose in this dissertation the re-reading of the Word of God as the point of departure for women liberation in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. This as illustrated in chapter six will be carried out through the historical-cultural, literary and rhetorical-theological aspects.

⁸⁶ This was a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa. It was an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in the country; it was a critique of the theological models that determined the type of activities the church engaged in to try to resolve the problems of the country. It was an attempt to develop, out of the perplexing situation, an alternative biblical and theological model that will in turn lead to forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future of the country.

⁸⁷ Black theology is defined as a theology of the oppressed, by the oppressed, for the liberation of the oppressed.

The CCAP Nkhoma Synod is challenged radically to re-read the same texts (1 Corinthians 14:34-35) and 1 Timothy 2:11-12) through a multi-dimensional approach, because a one-dimensional approach tends to deny the reality of their literary, socio-cultural and rhetorical-theological aspects of these texts. By rejecting the reality in which we live, says Rousseau (1986:80), makes any dialogue and epistemological pursuit impossible and senseless. This implies that the analysis and message of New Testament has to be relevant for this reality in which we live. Rousseau (1986:80) concludes: “If Christianity should ignore the realities of this world, it would mean the death of Christianity.” I would like to agree with Rousseau because the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, as am writing now, is in that state where any dialogue and epistemological pursuit of women leadership is a hassle.

Re-reading the texts through a multi-dimensional approach enables the Scriptures to be read in such a way that it is not a threat, nor as a means of oppressing or a burden to a certain group of people, in this case, women. This is exactly what Phiri & Nadar (2006:78) are talking about when they say, “Even those texts that are difficult to read have to be exposed, interrogated, deconstructed and re-interpreted until a liberating message or at least a voice that women can identify with can be found”. The Word of God is supposed to be liberating and not oppressing; to be life giving and not death threatening; to be healing and not hurting; to be loving and not hating; to be caring and not abandoning; to provide hope and not a hopeless situation. The list can go on and on but what am trying to portray is that the Word of God should provide an environment where all people regardless of gender should feel welcome and comfortable to live. Therefore, Njoroge & Reamonn (1994:29) are calling both women and men to re-read the Bible in order to recreate new models for ministry where everybody participates according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and not church policies, which are meant to limit and control. This also applies to any method or approach of interpreting the Word of God. Any approach or method that hinders people from experiencing grace, mercy and the love of God is what Schneiders (1982:68) calls ‘reductionist approaches’. Briefly, I just want to explain some of the characteristics of the multi-dimensional theory.

2.5.1.34. Liberating

The re-reading of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 helps the interpreter not to only look at the immediate text but also gives her/him an opportunity to explore the surrounding chapters. With this one will find that there are many liberating books, chapters and verses, which empower women to leadership roles (see 1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 3:26-29). After taking into account the larger context, it becomes evident how the Word of God liberates women to use their godly given gifts and take up leadership roles. The one-dimensional approach will only confine the interpreter to remain within the one or two verses, which neither tells her/him where the story comes from nor where it is going.

2.5.1.35. Healing

From all ages, the Word of God is meant to heal and not to hurt. So anything that hurts someone means it is in contradiction with the Word of God. So the re-reading approach heals the hatred souls of many women who have been abandoned by either the church or culture from rising up to the leadership position. Through this approach you see Paul encouraging women to learn. He knew that there was no way women would take up leadership positions in the church, but also in the society, without first learning. This was a message of healing to the wounded women who for so long have been deprived from such an opportunity. Unfortunately, the one-dimension, instead of healing, hurts the women more by banning them from learning.

2.5.1.36. Hope-giving

The Word of God gives hope to the hopeless. This is what the re-reading of the texts is all about. The same texts which for a long time created a hopeless situation with regards to women leadership; now gives endless hope to women leadership, when interpreted from a multi-dimensional point of view. After going through the literary, socio-cultural, rhetorical and theological aspects (chapter 5); one is able to see a bright future for women; women becoming reverends, presidents, doctors, and session clerks. This is something a one-dimensional approach does not see. All it sees is a hopeless woman in her inferior complex situation. Kapuma (2001:2) explains further on the same hope-giving issue by saying:

The church is a place of refuge and hope. It should provide the only escape when life is depressing. It is where women hope that their problems could be solved; therefore the church should be prepared to offer service to such women.

The church can only become a place of hope if it preaches the Word of hope to the hopeless and not the opposite, like that of rebuffing women from exercising their godly given leadership roles.

2.5.1.37. Loving and Caring

One of the outstanding characteristics of God's Word is that it is loving and caring. From Genesis to Revelation, the Word of God has shown that the abandoned, oppressed and ill-treated were loved and cared for by God. People from all walks of life, including the reverends of the Nkhoma Synod need to know that the Word of God is gender inclusive and not exclusive; is welcoming and not segregative. By being inclusive, it means it cares and loves everyone, even women. This being the case, women cannot be excluded from leadership roles. As the one-dimensional approach excludes women from becoming leaders, a multi-dimensional approach through the re-reading process is there to include women in leadership positions.

2.5.1.38. Life-giving

The whole purpose of Jesus being on earth was to let people have life and have it in abundance (John 10:10). This is what the gospel is all about. This includes both women and men. Unfortunately, the one-dimension approach which some reverends of the Nkhoma Synod are still clinging to, condemn all women in leadership and all men who are encouraging women leadership. It is sad reality when the whole Synod can spend hours and hours deciding on how to persuade women from attaining positions of leadership. So the multidimensional approach does not condemn women to death, instead, it gives life through the preaching of liberating, caring and loving messages of the cross, where both women and men receive grace and life through the forgiveness of sins.

From this explanation, it should become evident as to why I advocate the approach of re-reading the texts through the multi-dimensional approach, as discussed in this chapter. It is a life-giving, healing, caring, loving, hope-giving and reality depicting theory, which the CCAP Nkhoma Synod needs at this crucial moment in time,

especially when it is debating the way forward with regards to the issue of women and positions of leadership. For example, for the first time in the history of Nkhoma Synod ministers' wives peacefully marched from Chongoni, the lay training centre to Nkhoma Synod offices where they presented their complaints. The complaints were addressed to the moderamen through the General Secretary. One of the complaints was that the Synod is bias towards ministers. Ministers are divorcing their wives for unjustified reasons but still the Synod maintains the position of the minister while the wife and children suffer. This just shows that women are now tired of the injustices which are taking place in the Synod of Nkhoma.⁸⁸

Let me conclude this section by explaining how a multi-dimensional approach leads to transformation. I will start by affirming that transformation cannot take place in the absence of the Word of God. The Bible (Romans 10:13-17) says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ---Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ." There are three characters in this passage and these are: The sender who is God, the sent who are preachers and the receiver who needs transformation. The mediator, in this case the preachers, play a very crucial role of presenting the Word of God in such a way that it leads to transformation. This is where a multi-dimensional approach of reading biblical texts, together with the practical theological aspects of liberation, salvation and praxis, are needed. A one dimensional approach leads to the distortion of the message and once the message has been distorted it means transformation might not take place. A multi-dimensional approach is in a better position to bring out the true message because it puts into consideration the literary, social-cultural and theological aspects and also the aspects of liberation, salvation and praxis that is at the heart of the gospel. This explains why a one-dimensional approach

⁸⁸ The marching took place on 4th August, 2014. Women were bitter and some literally cried during the discussion which took place during the night of 2nd August, 2014 because of a minister who divorced his wife. Minister's wives agreed that they will march so that this behaviour should come to an end.

is problematic as it inhibits people from being transformed, and why a multi-dimensional approach is encouraged as it allows transformation to take place.

Another area which also needs to be re-read is the culture itself, because the people who go to church do not live in a vacuum. They come from different cultures; therefore, unless the culture from where they come also undergoes change, they will remain stagnant. Thus, the following subtitle is on the Chewa culture and how this culture can be re-read.

7.3.2. Toward re-reading Chewa Culture

I will begin this section by briefly defining what is meant by ‘culture’, followed by a brief explanation of the original Chewa culture, as well as the current Chewa culture; and then finally the re-reading of this culture will be unpacked.

2.5.1.39. Defining the term culture

Phiri (1997:13) has defined culture as people’s expression of their behavior towards one another, religious belief systems and practices, language, symbols, customs, art, music and etcetera. O’Neil (2006:1) uses Taylors’ definition of culture. Taylor was a pioneer English Anthropologist who in his book, ‘*Primitive Cultured,*’ defined culture “as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities that is acquired by man as a member of society”. He sees culture as a powerful human tool for surviving although it is a fragile phenomenon in that it is constantly changing and easily lost because it exists only in the minds of people. He says, our written languages, governments, buildings and other man-made things are merely the products of culture; and not culture in themselves, so much so that archaeologists can’t dig up culture directly in their excavations. The broken pots and other artifacts of ancient people that they uncover are only material remains that reflect cultural patterns, they are things that were made and used through cultural knowledge and skills.

In conclusion, O’Neil (2006:1) says culture has three layers, namely:

1. Body of cultural traditions, which distinguish one’s specific society for example, Italian, Nigerian, etc. By saying Italian, or Nigerian, Taylor says it refers to the shared beliefs, language and traditions that set each of these people

apart from others. This type of culture is acquired by being raised by parents and other members who have it.

2. Subculture which is formed when diverse societies in which people have come from different parts of the world retain much of their original cultural traditions. For example, in the United States, the subcultures are the Vietnamese-Americans, African-Americans or Mexican-Americans. They share a common identity, for example food, tradition, dialect or language.
3. Cultural universals are learned behavior patterns that are shared by all of humanity collectively. No matter where people live in the world, they share these universal traits, for instance, communicating with a verbal language, using age and gender to classify people like woman, man and teenager.

From the above definitions, it is obvious that culture is crucial even when it comes to interpreting the Bible. Christians cannot think about the gospel apart from its engagement with culture in which that gospel is communicated (Kanyoro, 2002:64). This is why it is credible for the culture to also go through a thorough exegesis because it is hard to talk about women leadership in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, while there are still non-liberating cultural practices.

2.5.1.40. The original Chewa culture

The original Chewa culture had a matrilineal type of society. Gough (1961:631-632) has defined a matrilineal society as a society in which descent is traced through mothers rather than fathers. Property in these societies is often passed from mothers to daughters. The Chewa woman in a matrilineal society was looked upon as the root of the lineage because she was supposed to remain united with her brothers and sisters; and together with them retain the rights of possession over children. As the root of a lineage, the woman was seen as a sacred vessel of life, therefore, responsible for the continuation of the community. This means that the community's future and destiny was decisively dependent on her, hence, in her womb she carried both male and female (Phiri, 2007:35-36).

Chewa women had the right to own the offspring of her marriage and the right to remarry after divorce or death of the husband. She had the privilege to inherit land

from her mother and use it with her husband (Phiri, 2007:25). Chewa women can also become chiefs (Chewa Religion, 2001)⁸⁹.

With regards to religion, the Chewa people believed that all living things were created by God on a mountain named Kapingintwa, during a thunderstorm. They believed that the ancestors and spirits of other living creatures play an impotent part in the present day society by being in constant contact with the living world (Gough, 2004)⁹⁰. This God was known by many names that described the elements of wet weather, for example, *Leza* (sustainer), *Chauta* (rainbow), *Mphambe* (lightening) and *Chisumphu* (giver of rain). God was worshipped communally in territorial rain shrines where the religious roles of women were very clear and accepted.

Women known as spirit wives were the controllers of these shrines where they received messages from God to the communities when in a state of ecstasy (Phiri, 2007:25). For example, the Chisumphu cult was headed by a great female prophetess called *Mangadzi*, who was from the royal Phiri clan, a sister of Undi (Rangeley, 1952:32). Gwengwe (1975:21) says that this chief's sister led prayers and was responsible for the actual pouring of the libations whilst still praying.

Another woman who had political powers was *Makewana* (Phiri, 2007:34). She was the priestess of the Phiri clan and her shrine was at Msinja⁹¹ (Phiri, 2007:26). Through her, Chauta's wishes were made known to human beings; and this was the highest status in the society. Her office was not hereditary but on her demonstration of an ecstatic visionary gift which must become apparent to the community during childhood (Malawi Cultures, 2013)⁹².

The Banda clan had female ritual leaders who were called *Mwari* (Phiri, 2007:26). These were spirit wives who resided in shrines and were political and spiritual leaders of the shrines. They were responsible for calling rain on behalf of the people and presided over initiation rites (Malawi Cultures, 2013). This means that in the Chewa

⁸⁹ no author is given.

⁹⁰ Page numbers are not provided.

⁹¹ Msinja was a name of a place where the shrine was situated.

⁹² No author is given.

culture, the male concept of God is difficult to accept because of our comparison of this rain cult (Phiri, 2007:28).

These leadership roles that were taken up by women in the Chewa culture gives an irrefutable picture that there was a pre-Malawian political organization which was based on the concept of ritualistic female leadership (Phiri, 1975:47) and that among the Banda clan, secular and religious leadership was in the hands of the spirit wives (Ntara, 1950:34).

In terms of roles, the Chewa culture has roles belonging to boys and also roles for the girls. As such, either gender grows up knowing what is expected of her or him. For instance, boys are engaged in farm activities from as early as six or seven years old. While girls of the same age are trained to fetch water, care for younger children, cook, clean the house, take maize to the maize mill and look after the sick (Gough, 2004). This means that among the Chewa, women and children, not men and boys are responsible for preparing *nsima*, the staple food (Molefi, 2012).⁹³

2.5.1.41. The current Chewa culture

As already stated in the previous section that the Chewa culture had been a matrilineal society, but they are now mixed with some families following a patrilineal system defined by Christian or Muslim followers. This has resulted in being influenced by both matrilineal and patrilineal leadership (Molefi, 2012). It was indicated in chapter one, how Chewa women lost their prestigious positions of leadership. The coming of the Portuguese between 1608 and 1667 with their introduction of the slave trade; the Protestants and Catholics later in the 19th Century; and the British protectorate between 1889 and 1904; not forgetting the Ngoni from South Africa, had a very big impact on the status of the Chewa women. All these groups had a patriarchal type of leadership which they imposed on this matrilineal society.

The introduction of the slave trade affected the Chewa women, in that Chewa men preferred marrying slave women unlike their own tribal women because slave women were more submissive and respective (Phiri, 2007:25).

⁹³ Page numbers are not provided.

At present, we have a Chewa culture where women's religious powers have been denied or reduced and passed over to men; the power her husband has over her has been strengthened; polygamy increased; and her image as a full human being has been tarnished (Phiri, 2007:25-26). Even in a very rare case where a woman has been chosen as a chief, her power is very minimal in that she is dependent on her uncles or brothers who have total power and control over her, whether she is single or married (Phiri, 2007:35).

I have so far defined culture; and explained the original and current Chewa culture. I now, in the next section, move on to the re-reading of this Chewa culture.

2.5.1.42. A re-reading of the Chewa culture

From what has been discovered so far in this research, the CCAP Nkhoma Synod which is predominately occupied by the Chewa matrilineal society is advised to re-read its rich culture. Culture is not static; and therefore it is possible to change in favour of the well-being of women as persons created by God. It is staggering to see how the Chewa culture was able to recognize and acknowledge the godly given leadership qualities entrusted to women and thus went as far as empowering them. This is what the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is being encouraged to emulate; a culture that is based on aspects of religion that has zero tolerance for discriminating acts, especially against women and children.

The research results has shown that among the Chewa of the Central Region, for a long time the highest religious position in the society was held by women; the principal intercessors with God on behalf of human beings were women; and the highest status in the society belonged to women (6.2.2.2).

The Chewa had a rich culture of women serving God in positions of leadership without men questioning the possibility of them holding such a powerful position. It is therefore contradictory for men, nowadays, to argue that African culture does not allow women to have power and authority over men, because it is against African culture. But the question to ask is, "Has African Traditional Religion (ATR) and culture really denied women any religious power in the community of men and women?" It is because of questions such as these, that the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is called to re-read its culture. It is surprising for the church in the Central Region where

the society is matrilineal to exclude women from leadership positions by basing their argument on culture, for there is evidence to the contrary proving that women have had such authority in the traditional culture.

I believe that through the process of re-reading, the CCAP Nkhoma Synod will be able to learn from the past culture of women leadership, in order to improve on the present culture of women disempowerment, and thereafter, will have a more fruitful and inclusive future where both women and men will be able to enjoy and participate in the godly given leadership roles without either party oppressing one another. Let us now see how the history of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod can be re-read.

7.3.1. Towards a re-reading of the history

It was discovered in chapter one, two and four, that one of the reasons being used by some of the men in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod to exclude women from leadership roles was the way the first missionaries presented Christianity. They never ordained women as reverends or elders. This means that the discrimination against the ordination of women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is a mentality that has been passed on and needs to be revisited. Since these missionaries came from South Africa, which is not far from Malawi, my advice to the leadership of the Synod is to re-read their history. They can do this through the program of exchange visits and learn from them because these two groups are still in touch. They will be shocked to learn that their spiritual mentors (missionaries) now have women reverends, elders and deacons, which they can emulate. Their argument based on the behaviour of the first missionaries, has become invalid and void.

Let me conclude these two last sessions by saying, in as much as I affirm the need for re-reading the Chewa culture and the history of the first missionaries, I make the claim that simply re-reading is insufficient unless the culture and history we re-read are analyzed and deemed worthy in terms of justice and support for life; and the dignity of women is verified.

This chapter marks the end of my long journey on the issue of women and their leadership roles in the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod. What follows is the summary of what has been uncovered from chapter one to chapter seven; with a few recommendations proposed for the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION, CONTRIBUTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The starting point for this dissertation was the researcher's own motivating factors that led her to engage in doing a research study on women and their leadership roles in the Nkhoma Synod. The researcher stipulated two factors that motivated her actions, namely: (1) Her personal suffering and experience as a woman in the Nkhoma Synod; and (2) The perception of the church and the society towards women with regards to church discipline, theological training and leadership positions.

The main purpose of this dissertation was to discover factors that have contributed to the desperate position of women within the church structures of the Nkhoma Synod with regards to their leadership roles. As a way of determining this, the researcher: (1) Engaged in a literature study; (2) Conducted an empirical research in different congregations of the Nkhoma Synod; (3) Tackled an indepth biblical interpretation of two specific and relevant texts; and (4) Developed a multi-dimensional theory to help the reverends correctly interpret the Scriptures.

The research questions that triggered this whole study were as follows:

1. To what extent are historical and cultural factors and particularly factors pertaining to the interpretation of the Bible, responsible for the lack of women in leadership positions in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod?
2. Complex as it may be to explore and measure the impact of these factors, would it be possible to substantiate and verify such influences empirically?
3. Once this has been done, would it, for instance, be possible to identify alternative readings of history, culture and the Bible?

In order to have a clear picture of what is going on, the researcher in chapter two gave the historical background of the Nkhoma Synod with regards to how it was established; the influence of the first missionaries; and how they viewed and treated women.

The researcher also introduced in chapter two the women's organization famously known as "*Chigwirizano cha amai*," in which its background, structure, aims, duties,

meaning, training, secrets of success, impact and challenges were well articulated and addressed.

The introducing of chapter three was very strategic because it helped to answer the question of, “Why is this going on?” The interpretive task was done through what is called, “Social Identity Theory”. By studying this theory it was discovered that the root cause of what is going on in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod could be traced back to an influencing factor of culture to which members of this Synod identify themselves with, besides the new identity which they now have as Christians. Tajfel et al. (1979:35) defined Social Identity Theory as, “A sense of self associated with an awareness that one belongs to a particular social group and that this group membership is important and meaningful”. It was thereafter discovered that this idea of a group leads to the two aspects of self-categorization and stereotyping. The analysis has shown that the moment a group is set; it automatically categorizes itself and considers their in-group to be more superior and special, than the other out-group. The theory showed that the issue of women and their leadership roles has its roots in this concept of ‘group,’ which has been created in the church. It was proved in chapter five that the presence of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, made men categorize themselves as superior, powerful, decision-makers, etc., and view women as being weak, passive listeners and submissive. Women however, also categorized themselves as more spiritual and more caring than men.

The historical background in chapter two, the Social Identity theory in chapter three and the biblical interpretation within the Nkhoma Synod in chapter four guided the researcher to formulate the questionnaire, which was used in chapter five. This questionnaire was comprised of eight questions. Chapter five focused on the empirical research which was conducted among the members of *Chigwirizano cha amai*, church elders and reverends. The researcher used Osmer’s (2008:4) design and Ackermann’s (2014:1-15) approach to practical theology.

The aim here was to determine if the lack of women in leadership positions in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod was the result of historical, cultural or biblical factors. Through this research, the researcher managed to identify factors behind this lack of women in leadership roles. The data unveiled that the main leading factor was due to the way in which the leaders interpreted the Word of God. Their interpretation has

affected the way women are treated in the church; and that is, they are prohibited from taking leadership roles. The data also revealed other factors that hinder women from attaining leadership roles, like the history of the missionaries and the Chewa culture. These empirical findings are in agreement with the findings of the literature study in chapters two, three and four. The research results proved that the legacy of the first missionaries, in as far as women are concerned, is still having a very big impact on the church today, especially on how women are treated. The findings have also proved that the culture has also contributed towards the resistance of women in leadership. Issues like self-categorization and stereotyping have left women being stereotyped as weak vessels, and therefore not eligible for leadership positions. Finally, the issue of biblical interpretation as discussed in chapter four has also been proved true by the empirical research with many church elders, reverends and some few women saying it is against the Word of God to allow women take up leadership roles in the church.

All these findings, both from the literature review and empirical research needed to be interpreted by using theological concepts in order to know “what ought to be going on” (Osmer, 2008). This normative task in chapter six was actually carried out by interpreting the two given texts of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. The literary, historical and theological aspects were all put into consideration before coming up with the final message.

Chapter seven developed the pragmatic task, which determined a strategy of action to assist the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod, and the entire Synod at large, to think of changing the way of interpreting the Word of God. With regards to this interpretation process, the researcher suggested that the preachers of the gospel i.e. mainly reverends and church elders, should use and follow a multi-dimensional approach which considers the literary, historical and rhetorical-theological approach when interpreting the Scriptures. This approach is in contrast with what Jonker in chapter six calls a “one-dimensional approach,” which only considers the literal translation of the Word of God.

In relation to culture, the researcher suggested that the Nkhoma Synod needs to reclaim the rich ancient Chewa culture which was in agreement with the Word of God in Galatians 3:28 which says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The ancient Chewa culture recognized

the godly given potential in women; as such, it influenced women by entrusting them with religious leadership powers.

With regards to history, the researcher suggested that the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod should:

1. Send a team comprised of church elders, reverends and members of *Chigwirizano cha amai* to Cape Town, where the first missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church came from. They should see and find out if their Mother Church is still adhering to these discriminative policies against women. They should learn from them how they managed to fight against these oppressive roles of sidelining women from leadership positions. If they cannot afford to send a team due to financial hiccups, they should ask the DRC to send its convoy which should be comprised of male and female ministers, as well as female church elders and deacons.
2. Remember that the CCAP Nkhoma Synod is a Reformed Church. As such, it means that they are eligible to keep on reforming as needs arise and circumstances change. It is vital to consider the context in which the church exists, bearing in mind that the church doesn't exist in a vacuum; it exists within the historical and social-context.

After looking at what this dissertation is all about, I now turn my focus to the contribution that this research seeks to make.

8.2. CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

The researcher is of the opinion that this research has made a significant contribution, not only to the department of Practical Theology and the Faculty of Theology at large, but also to the entire University of Stellenbosch. The researcher makes this assumption because the issue which she has addressed regarding women leadership is not only an issue concerning practical theology or the Faculty of Theology; it involves all the faculties of this University. Even though the researcher has written from a Practical Theology and New Testament perspective still other faculties can benefit from it by using her Social Identity Theory, which applies to all disciplines. They can also greatly benefit from her multi-dimensional approach, especially its liberating, life-giving, caring and hope-giving aspects, which the researcher believes is greatly demanded by

both women and men. Another contribution to the body of knowledge at Stellenbosch University and Nkhoma Synod is the introducing of the re-reading of the Bible, history and culture through this approach. I believe that by making use of this approach, and ultimately by the life-giving work of God's Spirit, transformation of people's lives will be taking place both in the church and society. This research is therefore a gift offered to any scholar who may be interested in further research.

8.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

In as much as this dissertation has sufficiently provided a basic multi-dimensional theory to the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod as means of empowering women to leadership positions, the researcher feels there are some areas which need further consideration which did not form a major focus of this dissertation. This is why they were not discussed fully or elaborated on in this study. Some of these areas are as follows:

8.3.1. Bible study

Bible study is one of the tools that is used worldwide for spiritual development; and the Nkhoma Synod is not exempted from using it. Krejcir (1989)⁹⁴ has defined Bible study as finding the true meaning of the passage of Scripture from its word meanings and context; it is a tool and discipline which enables us to get more out of what we read. Thames & Hudson (1991:1) asserts that the study of the Bible must be taken in a serious frame of mind. Since this aspect of Bible study is not a new phenomenon in the Synod, I therefore suggest that some of these Bible study lessons should include stories of women, which acknowledges the achievements of women and women leadership roles; unlike only depicting stories on the failures of women and their weaknesses. The more one studies how Jesus Christ liberated and accepted the ministry of women, the more their perception on women leadership will begin to change for the better. Passages on the love of God, the equality of human beings in the eyes of God, accepting and tolerating one another, should be depicted in these Bible studies. By doing so, will mean that the spiritual development which occurs as a result of the Bible study will not only be one-sided. By one-sided, I mean only having

⁹⁴ Page numbers were not provided.

a good relationship with God and not your fellow human being. Instead, it will be two-sided; thus, when a Christian has a good relationship with God, but also with her/his fellow human being, irrespective of gender. You consider your fellow human being as equal with you, therefore, equally possible to attain leadership roles from God almighty. This leads us to our second recommendation.

8.3.2. Leadership formation

The leadership of the church is crucial because it determines the direction of the church. The church with visionary leaders prospers in whatever it does; while the church without visionary leaders perishes (Proverbs 29:18). Thus, leadership formation becomes vital to this discussion, and the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod is encouraged by the researcher to take this matter seriously. The topic of leadership formation is a very vast topic, but in this dissertation the researcher is mainly interested in the following categories:

2.5.1.43. People/task-oriented leaders

I will start by defining these two terms. A people-oriented leadership style is that which focuses on organizing, supporting and developing one's team members; this participatory style encourages good teamwork and creative collaboration. A task-oriented leadership style focuses on getting the job done; where you define the work and the roles required, put structures in place, and plan, organize and monitor the work to be done (Blake, 1964:84). This means that people/task-oriented leaders both have a high concern for people and a high concern for the task. After looking at the definitions of these terms, I therefore invite the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod to invest much of their time, energy and money in developing leaders of both calibers. The Synod needs both types of leaders, for they will on the one hand support and develop the welfare of their team members of whom women are included; while on the other hand, they will make sure that the assigned job gets done.

I believe the Nkhoma Synod needs both types of leaders who are also gender insensitive; and at the same time are in the position of being able to plan, organize and monitor the work that has been entrusted into their care by God, unlike laissez-faire leadership who are not concerned with God's work. This point leads us now to the second type of leadership called, "transformational leadership".

2.5.1.44. Transformational leadership

Cherry (2014)⁹⁵ has defined transformational leadership as a type of leadership style that can inspire positive change in those who follow; these leaders are generally energetic, enthusiastic and passionate. She says, “Not only are these leaders concerned and involved in the process; they are also focused on helping every member of the group succeed as well. Cherry (2014) quotes James MacGregor, the leadership expert who introduced transformational leadership and the president biographer who said, “Transformational leadership can be seen when leaders and followers make each other to advance to a higher level of moral and motivation; they are able to inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions and motivations to work toward common goals.” The issue of women leadership in the Nkhoma Synod is calling for transformational leaders who can inspire positive change for women who for a long time have been sidelined from leadership positions; leaders who can show passionate hearts towards these women and help them succeed and excel in their leadership roles. I therefore encourage the Nkhoma Synod as a whole to strive for this type of leadership. This final aspect of leadership under the second recommendation of leadership formation takes us further to a third recommendation, that of church governing bodies.

8.3.3. Church governing bodies

The Church of Wales (2007)⁹⁶ in its constitution, chapter 11 section 33, has defined the church governing body as, “The body which is responsible for decisions that affect the church’s faith, order and worship”. It also has powers to make regulations for the general management and good governance of the church, and the property and affairs thereof⁹⁷. The Free Dictionary (2014)⁹⁸ has defined it as, “The persons (or committees or departments and etcetera) that makes up a body for the purpose of administering something”. After understanding the definition of the church governing body, I hereby

⁹⁵ The page number is not given; see the bibliography for more details.

⁹⁶ The page number is not given; but for more details see the bibliography.

⁹⁷ This is a very important definition or point to be considered seriously, because if we want change to take place in regard to women leadership, we need to discuss how we should go about church polity. A Church document like *zoramulira* needs to be revisited and revised. It has to include factors on how women can be empowered through leadership positions.

⁹⁸ The page number is not given; but for more details see the bibliography.

propose to the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod that its church governing bodies should have a 50 to 50 representation of women and men. Ackermann (1996:34) clearly states that the church which does not fully utilize the gifts of all its members, both women and men, is impoverished. She talks of three aspects which are keys to the church of God which I would encourage the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod to emulate, even in its church governing bodies. These areas are liberation, salvation and praxis (See 1.8.1-1.8.3 for detailed information).

After defining the term, ‘church governing body,’ at the beginning I suggested that the Synod should involve in its governing bodies the equal percentage of both women and men. By such doing, it means even women will be involved in decision-making. This is what Ackermann (2014:1-14) calls, ‘liberation,’ (being concerned with all people to become full participants in human society), ‘salvation’ (fighting against any form of oppression and recognizing the potential and abilities of every human being) and ‘theory/praxis’ (applying faith in Christ to the concrete contemporary situation of the church). The following recommendation is on the Sunday school task team.

8.3.4. Sunday School Task Team (SSTT)

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6). There is also a local saying, “*Kuwongola mtengo mpyamba.*”⁹⁹ Sunday school is the foundation of every Christian, therefore, it is crucial for the Synod of Nkhoma to make sure that these Sunday schools are well taken care of. This can be achieved by making sure that it has all the needed materials, like Bibles and Bible storybooks; and that the truth is preached.

I therefore suggest that since the current Sunday school lessons are outdated, a task team should be formed with the aim of developing a new booklet which should include stories of biblical women leaders and achievers, and should also focus on the equality of women and men, etc. The Synod should also consider the playing of games and toys, which these children use at the church. Toys that depict women as being weak vessels and children producers, etc., should be discouraged. Instead, girls should be

⁹⁹ It literally means that the time to straighten a tree is while it is still young because it will be hard to do so when it is old. It will just break.

encouraged through toys which portray them as having the potential of becoming leaders and achievers. For examples, toy cars, airplanes or pictures which show women preaching from the pulpit. Giving children these types of Bible stories and toys/games will obviously help the children from a tender age to develop a positive attitude towards women leadership. They will grow up with the mentality that either girls or boys; women or men, can both attain leadership roles since they are all created in the image of God and are equal in His eyes.

Another area that this task team should address concerns the enrollment of Sunday school teachers. The teaching of Sunday school by mainly women sends the wrong message to these children because they think it is of low status/class, and is therefore not suitable for men who are considered to be strong, but for women who are classified as weaker vessels. By saying that Sunday school should be taught by women because they are weak, implies that even those that are being taught (children) by them (women) are also weak. This is in conflict with what Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14)¹⁰⁰. Jesus Christ did not undermine children and He did not refer them to the disciples to show that He is too senior to handle them. He blessed them Himself; He was neither too big nor too holy for the children. Who are we then to undermine the ministry of children if the Creator of the heavens and earth honored it?

I therefore urge this task team to develop the necessary criteria that will help to open the doors for men to change their negative mentality towards the teaching of children. I believe incorporating male teachers will instil a positive impact upon the mind-set of the children. The belief that Sunday school is for women of low status will dissipate. This recommendation takes us to the fifth one, ‘the message and vocabulary from the pulpit’.

¹⁰⁰ See also Luke 18:16 and Mark 10:14.

8.3.5. The message and vocabulary from the pulpit

Another area which I would want the leadership of the Synod to have a critical eye on is the message and vocabulary which is used by some church elders and reverends when preaching. It is very rare to hear the reverend preaching from passages like that of Deborah, Phoebe and Esther that are inclusive of women. These passages portray these women as leaders and achievers, respectively. It is therefore my suggestion to the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod to advise its reverends and church elders to start preaching from the passages that are more inclusive of women that give priority to the equality of women and men.

In terms of vocabulary, there are some reverends and church elders who use either bad or condemning vocabulary, for example, words like, ‘do not cry like a woman’, ‘behave like a man’, ‘be courageous like a man’ and etcetera. They also use some Bible passages to condemn women. For example, they use the story of the fall of man (Genesis 3:1-19) to condemn women as the source of evil; and the passage on Jezebel (1 Kings 21:1-16) is used to portray women as evil with hardened hearts. In as much as they are not stopped from preaching from these passages; the issue is how they interpret these passages. They should always remember the words of Ackermann (1985:36) that at the heart of the gospel lies liberation, as quoted in chapter one of this dissertation.

This point was further emphasized in chapter seven when the multi-dimensional approach was discussed; where it was pointed out that the Word of God is liberating and not condemning, it is inclusive and not exclusive. They should try as much as possible to avoid stereotyping. Social Identity Theory in chapter three showed how self-categorization leads to stereotyping. In this case we see that all women are stereotyped as the source of evil with hardened hearts simply because of Eve and Jezebel, respectively. After looking at the message and vocabulary used from the pulpit, I now move on to the sixth recommendation, which has to do with women attending Synodical meetings and being in the moderamen.

8.3.6. Women attending the Synodical meetings and Moderamen

The absence of women in the Moderamen and in the Synodical meetings further proves the results in chapter five that women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod are

sidelined from leadership positions. These are the forums where decisions concerning the whole Synod are made. The absence of women in these forums might mean two things:

2.5.1.45. Women are not involved in decision-making

The fact that women do not attend the meetings and forums where decisions are made means that women are completely sidelined from making decisions. This implies that the contributions that women make are not regarded as authentic and important.

2.5.1.46. Women's voices are not heard

The absence of the voices of women in these forums that specifically focus on decision-making speaks volumes. One of these points is that the issue regarding the leadership of women are addressed in a biased manner because the women themselves are not given the opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns, fears, joys, etc.

Their voices are only heard through their husbands (only those whose husband's are reverends and church elders) and *amkhalapakati*. The challenge comes when the husband's opinion on the given issue differs from that of their wife. This leaves uncertainty whether the husband will voice his own view, or that of his wife. Rarely are chances given to the Executive committee of *Chigwirizano cha amai* to report their activities at the Synodical meetings where they are only given a maximum of one hour. I therefore suggest to the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod to seriously consider having women in the Moderamen and during the Synodical meeting. This will be one way of having their voices heard; simultaneously acknowledging the beauty of God's creation in that He created woman and man who can serve together in what Ackermann (1988:17-18) calls, "partnership," where women are no longer considered to be the "outsiders" or "the other," but must share with men as participants in a common journey to discover the meaning of life and ministry in Christ. These are some of the recommendations made by this researcher, freely offered to the leadership of the Nkhoma Synod. After stating the recommendations, what remains is nothing else other than the final remarks.

8.4. FINAL REMARKS

It is always exhilarating after being on a plane for hours and hours to finally touch down, for this is what everyone looks forward to. In the same way, after journeying from chapter one where my journey started, it is encouraging to know that I can finally land now. My landing ground shall be called, “final remarks”.

In as much as this research addressed the leadership roles of women in the Nkhoma Synod, let me confess that I have personally benefited more than anybody else.

There is a saying that goes like this, “As the hands wash the clothes, they are on the other hand being washed as well”. This is exactly what has happened to me; I have been washed. I started this dissertation with a very narrow understanding of this theme, but I have finished with an in-depth understanding. I have been enriched and sharpened by the historical, cultural and biblical factors. Going through the Social Identity Theory was an eye opener unveiling the dynamics of groups; and the impact they have on an individual to the extent of depersonalizing her/himself for the solidarity of the group. Looking at how self-categorization can favour the in-group members against the out-group; and how stereotyping can become hazardous to those who are being stereotyped.

The climax of this whole exercise was on the biblical interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12, from a multi-dimensional approach. It was a tough exercise but worth doing because I have learnt so much more that I wouldn't otherwise have known if it were not for this dissertation. Going through the literary, historical and theological aspects was more like digging for gold from the mine which leaves the owner rich and happy. This is what I am now; I have been enriched with God's Word with regards to women in leadership. I consider the writing of this dissertation as a gift from God entrusted to me with the aim that I should help not only my fellow women, but also men who have the passion of knowing the truth of God's Word concerning women leadership. May the Almighty God and Him alone receive all the glory, honour and praise for ever and ever, Amen!

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ANNEXURE 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

1. You are at a gathering and a person asks you about the current relationship between women and the church leadership (the decision makers, e.g. reverends, church elders and deacons). What story would you tell (about something that has happened to/with you or a friend you know) to illustrate this relationship?
2. We are talking today about how woman are being treated in the church, in the church community and how we perceive this. Please tell me a story of what you know of how the first missionaries presented the gospel and the effect it had on the treatment of women. Please give some examples.
3. You have told me a few stories about events that have formed your way of thinking about the early teaching of the missionaries and about the current relationship between the church and women. Can you tell about current events that are taking place to illustrate where the church is going in terms of women in leadership positions?
4. Some of the people in your community are stating that women are being sidelined in leadership roles in the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod. Can you think of a story which happened to you or someone you know, to show if this is true or not?
5. Do you think the Nkhoma Synod is divided on the issue of having women in leadership positions? If so, why do you think that is the case; and how would you describe your own position? Can you tell a story to motivate why you chose this position?
6. How do you think the context (home, at school, and in your community) affects the way you understand the role of women and girls?
7. Explain how the environment at Sunday school and catechumen classes have contributed to the way you perceive women and men in terms of their teaching and leadership roles.
8. If the opportunity is given to change the status of women in the church, how best do you think this should be done?

The answers to each of these questions must not be shorter than 200 words. We are looking for a thick description of the respondents' experiences.

ANNEXURE 2: SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH THE MEMBERS OF *CHIGWIRIZANO CHA AMAI* ON QUESTION ONE (C1-12)

Interviewer: You are at a gathering and a person asks you about the current relationship between women and the church leadership (decision-makers, e.g. reverends, elders and deacons). What story would you tell about something that has happened to you or your friend you know to illustrate this relationship?

C1: There is a good relationship because we have our own organization within the church called *Chigwirizano cha amai* such that when the church excommunicates or disciplines a member of this organization, automatically she is also excommunicated from or disciplined by the organization.

C1: There is a good relationship because the church has assigned amkhalapakati to work as mediators between the church leadership and our organization, *Chigwirizano cha amai*. Through them our concerns and issues are presented to the session.

C1: I think there is good relationship since we members of *Chigwirizano* are free to do development work in the church like buying the Holy Communion vessels and attire, building kitchen for church use, etc.

C2: There is a good relationship because our Synod has accepted us to have our own organization which is so instrumental especially in the areas of, for example, welcoming a new minister. Women work day and night at the minister's house for almost a week, cooking of his whole family, until his day of induction. Women are the ones who during the funeral stay at the bereaved house for almost two days, singing day and night and providing moral support etc.

C4: There is a good relationship because when we as *Chigwirizano cha amai* have a problem for example a short-fall in our budget of annual conference, we ask the leadership of the church to come to our rescue and vice versa.

C3: There is now gender in the church since women are church elders, a decision which was made by Synod. This means there is no difference between men and women except that by nature, biologically men are powerful and women ought to be submissive. This has an implication when it comes to session¹⁰¹ meetings because women have to wait for a minister and men leaders to contribute first before them.

¹⁰¹ Session is more like the council of leaders where they meet to discuss hot issues of the church. Some of these meetings are peacefully done and for the betterment of the church but some of them have turned to be a fighting battle with some insulting words; either between church elders or between elders and reverends.

C3: There is a good relationship because unlike in the past, women now can become church elders and deacons. Women are also allowed to preach on the pulpit and can enter the vestry.

C7: The synod has allowed women to take up leadership roles of eldership and deaconship but the problem is that the mentality of some members has not yet been changed. This has led to some resistance; therefore despite the fact that some women are elders and deacons but when it comes to decision making, it is very hard for men elders to accept a decision from a woman.

C8: There is good relationship because women are also allowed to go to the pulpit and preach something which was not there before. This should continue so that women should also in future become reverends.

C9: There is a good relationship because the majorities in the church are women and therefore we are responsible for the welfare of the church like visiting the sick and the weak but also taking care of the minister's welfare especially in the area of his upkeep like food.

C9: There is a good relationship with the church leadership because three quarters of the church are women. We work together; men are few such that without women church will fail in many ways.

C10: There is a good relationship because we are all equal, we are all the children of God and we all do things together.

C10: As of now there is good relationship because we all have Jesus Christ and we accredit our relationship to Him.

C12: There is a good relationship since all of us worship the same God.

C3: We are part of God's creation. We are very instrumental both in the society and in the church.

C5: The relationship is poor because so far there are very few areas where the leaders involve us, the rest are being involved by men e.g. preaching.

C5: The only problem is that up to now the Synod has not allowed women to become ministers. We feel we are being oppressed and we are asking the Synod to give women the opportunity to be ordained as ministers.

C12: Up to now there is no woman elder or deacon in my congregation.

C12: There is a problem in our relationship with the church leadership because men consider us women as failures e.g. when it comes to preaching, men do not believe that women can be powerful preachers just like them. They oppress us.

C12: Our relationship is bad especially when it comes to decision making. For example the calling of the new minister, women are not consulted, they decide on who to call, leaving women just to receive the end result. But when the minister comes they will ask the same women whom they ignored in decision making to take a leading role of cooking for the minister up to his induction day. Thereafter they will ask the same women to do monthly visits with some groceries.

C11: Our relationship is sometimes good and sometimes poor. There are some leaders who are cooperative while some are aggressive.

C11: The relationship is mainly based on the type of the reverend you have at that time. If the pastor is not born again then there develops a poor relationship but if he is born again then he involves women in the leadership of the church. He is the one to enlighten men who are against women leadership for example in Acts 2:17 the Bible does not say men or women but it says, "On the flesh" which means it is either a woman or man. Women can also take up leadership roles because Christianity has nothing to do with man or woman.

C1: If a pastor brings good news about women leadership then the church follows that but if he brings false message against women leadership then the church again ignorantly grasps his message, leading elders to fight against women leadership.

C7: The relationship is only good when it comes to any other issues except the issue of women leadership. They think it is culturally a taboo for a woman elder to go together on church visits with a man elder who is not your husband or vice versa.

C7: There is a good relationship but when it comes to reporting women issues to the session, then women are not permitted; our decisions have to go through *amkhalapakati*.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH MEN CHURCH ELDER ON QUESTION ONE (E 13-20)

E13: There is a good relationship because the voices of women's guild are heard at the session through our presiding *amkhalapakati* and vice versa.

E13: There is good relationship since women through their *Chigwirizano cha amai* are able to participate in the life and activities of the church.

E14: Through *Chigwirizano cha amai* women are leading in the development projects of the church. The only problem is that they are weak thus why even in the Bible, all leadership roles were assigned to men. Roles like king, prophets, etc. Otherwise they are very committed in the church, country and in the society.

E14: Women through *Chigwirizano cha amai* are very helpful and supportive, we rely on them. They are also respectful.

E16: There is a good relationship because our Synod has entrusted within their organization some of these tasks: overseeing the welfare of the minister, counselling, cleaning the church and some development projects.

E16: There is good relationship since the majorities are women despite the fact of denying them leadership roles like being ministers. This is wrong and the Synod has to scrutinize the situation again because in many things it is them who help us. The majorities in the church are women and their impact on the church cannot be overshadowed. This is as a result of the good relationship fostered by the leadership of the church.

E14: The relationship is good basing on the fact that on Sundays the big part of the church is occupied by women, almost twice as much as men. The only reservation is their ability to entice men especially we church elders.

E14: There is a good relationship because we all worship the same God and we don't chase women from the church service.

E17: Women are part of the creation just as we are and they are very instrumental, not only in the church but also countrywide. By God's design, a human being exists on earth through a woman but by nature they are weak and need a helping hand for guidance but this does not stop them from achieving greater things.

E18: It is good because qualified women are preaching and elected as elders and deacons.

E13: There is now a very slight change for the better because women are now allowed to preach on Wednesdays, something which was not there in the past.

E15: We have women leaders in our church now, the only problem is that they are slow in doing things. Sometimes they ignore church duties due to some other engagements at home. All they need is ample time of training them because women leadership is a new phenomenon in our Synod.

E16: Women are very instrumental in the church but out of 100 women only 2 or 3 qualify to become leaders. Unfortunately even these few, they are shy to contribute during the session due to their submissive attitude.

E19: What did God say? Not myself or my uncle! He said it is not good for man to be alone. What is it now that stops women from taking up leadership roles? Just imagine, in the session, there are no women, only men; this is not good. If women cannot become leaders, then it is just good as well to let them not come to church, it should be only men. We have a very good relationship with women in as far as it involves other issues and activities but not women leadership because they are weak; they do not contribute and are not comfortable. So in order to give them respect, it is not good

for them to become elder and deacons, they should be busy with the Chigwirizano cha amai activities.

E20: Women are a blessing to us men; they are there to help us in various ways but not church leadership roles because they are already engaged with other home activities. Most of the women who are leaders relies much on men for example women chiefs, they rely on their uncles or brothers. Very few women are successful. Even in the church, women leaders are weak and sometimes they don't even finish their term of office. This is a clear indication that she is meant for home management and not church leadership.

E17: There is a good relationship because we all worship the same God and we don't chase women from the church service.

E18: Women are part of the creation just as we are and they are very instrumental, not only in the church but also countrywide. By God's design, a human being exists on earth through a woman but by nature they are weak and need a helping hand for guidance but this does not stop them from achieving greater things.

E13: It is good because qualified women are preaching and elected as elders and deacons.

E15: There is now a very slight change for the better because women are now allowed to preach on Wednesdays, something which was not there in the past.

E19: We have women leaders in our church now, the only problem is that they are slow in doing things. Sometimes they ignore church duties due to some other engagements at home. All they need is ample time of training them because women leadership is a new phenomenon in our Synod.

E19: Women are very instrumental in the church but out of 100 women only 2 or 3 qualify to become leaders. Unfortunately even these few, they are shy to contribute during the session due to their submissive attitude.

E20: What did God say? Not myself or my uncle! He said it is not good for man to be alone. What is it now that stops women from taking up leadership roles? Just imagine, in the session, there are no women, only men; this is not good. If women cannot become leaders, then it is just good as well to let them not come to church, it should be only men who are strong and important.

E18: We have a very good relationship with women in as far as it involves other issues and activities but not women leadership because they are weak; they do not contribute and are not comfortable. So in order to give them respect, it is not good for them to become elder and deacons, they should be busy with the *Chigwirizano cha amai* activities.

E18: Women are a blessing to us men; they are there to help us in various ways but not church leadership roles because they are already engaged with other home activities. Most of the women who are leaders relies much on men for example women chiefs, they rely on their uncles or brothers. Very few women are successful. Even in the church, women leaders are weak and sometimes they don't even finish their term of office. This is a clear indication that she is meant for home management and not church leadership.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH REVERENDS ON QUESTION ONE (21-25).

R21: There is a good relationship because women are able to voice out their concerns and issues to the leadership of the church through the chosen *amkhalapakati*.

R22: It is still a challenge in the church because our Synod considers the leadership of the church is the men's responsibility unlike in other Synods of Livingstonia and Blantyre but also in Pentecostal churches where women are ordained as elders and reverends.

R24: The relationship is not good because we consider women as weak and therefore cannot effectively contribute to the welfares of the church.

R23: It is not good because women are not preaching.

R25: The relationship as of now in Nkhoma Synod is not straight forward because there are some congregations which have women elders and deacons while some do not have. There is a need for the Synod to discuss and agree on one thing, either for women or against women leaders. We need to engage in the Bible to give us the direction on this issue.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF CHIGWIRIZANO CHA AMAI ON QUESTION TWO

Interviewer: We are talking about how women are being treated in the church community. Please tell me a story of what you know of how the first missionaries presented the gospel and the effect it has on the treatment of women today. Please give some examples.

C1: During the time of the first missionaries, neither were women ordained as church elders and deacons nor were they allowed preaching.

C2: During missionaries' era, women were not given a chance in the congregation except during women meetings.

C3: Early missionaries said that women should be quiet according to 1 Corinthians 14:33-34.

C4: During the time of missionaries, women were oppressed; they were not allowed to take up leadership roles.

C5: I believe the way first missionaries treated women has a big impact on the current relationship of women and the church in that they saw women as weak vessels.

C10: When missionaries came, their gospel was for salvation of both men and women for they are all equal in the eyes of God.

C11: The first missionaries helped women to serve God without fear because they emphasized on the fact that we are God's creation according to the book of Genesis 3.

C6: Missionaries helped in planting the churches; hence people were free to hear the word of God which has helped our spiritual lives.

C8: When missionaries came they opened school where both girls and boys were educated. They had a vision that in future women will take up leadership roles, otherwise they wouldn't have allowed women to go to school to learn how to read or write for education is the key to leadership.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH MEN CHURCH ELDER ON QUESTION TWO

E15: The missionaries avoided women from leadership roles of being an elder, deacon and reverend because the Bible says women are weak vessels that need to be helped by men. Therefore it is better to give women other roles unlike the leadership ones.

E16: In those days women were used in the homes for cooking, washing and not in leadership roles. This has affected the current resistance of women leadership in our church.

E17: Missionaries did not involve women in leadership roles because they are weak and are easily taken up by foreign doctrines and teachings. We too don't want them to take up leadership roles.

E13: When the missionaries came they presented the word of God that women should be silent; therefore they did not allow them to take up leadership roles. We too don't want them to take up leadership roles.

E14: Missionaries didn't encourage women to take up leadership roles. This has resulted to the current problem of denying women from taking up leadership roles.

E19: The gospel preached by our first Dutch missionaries was for all people both men and women; there was no segregation.

E19: We are told that missionaries worked together with their wives and children. They didn't leave their wives back home in South Africa, but together they did mission work.

E13: Missionaries helped that both men and women should come together and hear the word of God because all are equal before Him.

E15: Missionaries brought good news which helped us to become born again and be able to have good relationship with our friends.

E20: They were indeed sent by God to come otherwise our country would have remained in darkness. Their message is still bearing fruits thus why we have reverends now.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH REVERENDS ON QUESTION 2

R21: The first missionaries didn't include women in leadership roles because the Bible says that women are weaker vessels. We are just told that their wives were involved in other activities but not as elders and deacons.

R22: Their gospel was not women friendly; it didn't recognize women as capable vessels to take up leadership roles. This has affected our systems so much because up to now some of us are still holding sot what our spiritual fathers indoctrinated in us.

R23: Missionaries involved women in their activities except those of leadership because their first agenda wasn't women leadership but salvation for all.

R24: The message of the first missionaries was for both men and women to be saved.

R21: When the missionaries came they found men segregating women but through their preaching men came to realize that salvation of Jesus Christ is for both men and women.

R25: The gospel accommodated women because it preached about love and forgiveness in a society where women were not regarded as human beings but as property.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW WITH MEMBERS OF *CHIGWIRIZANO CHA AMAI* ON

QUESTION THREE.

Interviewer: **You have told me a few stories about events that formed your way of thinking about the early teaching of missionaries and about the current relationship between the church and women. Can you tell me about current events that are taking place to illustrate where the church is going in terms of women in leadership positions?**

C1: The church has now changed because women are taking up leadership roles and we believe they will also become reverends. We can foresee that.

C2: Women are now allowed to preach on the pulpit and we have the hope that we will in due course become ministers.

C3: There is a bright future for women leadership because the Synod has now given them the access to leadership roles of eldership and deaconship.

C8: Even though women are now elected as elders and deacons, but still the resistance is very high which makes the future of women leaders unrealistic.

C10: Women are now allowed to preach on the pulpit during Sunday service and some are even elders and deacons but this does not have any future because the majority of men elders and reverends are against this decision.

C9: In our church there is no woman leader. Neither do they allow us to preach on Sunday, I therefore see no hope for women leadership in our church.

C10: The church completely refused women to become elders and deacons on the grounds that a woman elder and a man elder cannot have church visits together. With this mentality, I don't think things will change for the betterment of women leadership.

C11: Although women are in the majority but up to now no-one has ascended to any leadership position and I foresee that they will not make it in future.

C12: There is completely no woman elder and even a woman deacon in my congregation. All are men but still since in other congregation, women are elected as elders, deacons, I believe women will become leaders and preachers.

C11: The fact that women are in the majority in the church, I am so optimistic that although currently there are no women leaders but the church leadership will have no option in future but ordain them because the pressure will be too much for them to bear.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW WITH MEN CHURCH ELDERS ON QUESTION THREE

E15: With the current situation of women becoming elders and deacons, there is a bright future and we even think that all congregations in CCAP Nkhoma will allow women leadership.

E15: There are indeed women elders and deacons in our congregations now but the fact that this issue has been re-sent to presbyteries for more scrutinizing makes it very hard to continue.

E16: The Synod made a wrong decision of allowing women leaders; the majorities are not of the view therefore I don't see it progressing.

E17: Although we have women leaders and preachers, but I would rather enlighten the Synod to withdraw the decision because it is against the word of God.

E18: There are currently no women leaders and preachers in my congregation and my presbytery because we agreed as a presbytery not to bow down to the leadership of women because this is a secular-driven project. Church has nothing to do with gender issues.

E19: Although we do not currently have women leaders, but the church is now considering of electing women as leaders.

E14: The current absence of women in leadership roles is not a hopeless situation. As the world is on the forefront with the issue of women empowerment, the church will also follow.

E20: The absence of women in leadership roles in my church is in accordance with the word of God; therefore since God's word is infallible and inerrant, it means women will never be accepted leaders.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH REVERENDS ON QUESTION THREE

R21: Although there are women leaders in our congregations, this is not good and it has to be terminated because this is a gender equality syndrome which has been activated by democracy. The church is not a place of democracy.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF *CHIGWIRIZANO CHA AMAI* ON QUESTION FOUR.

Interviewer: **Some of the people in your community are stating that women are being side-lined in leadership roles in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Can you think of a story which happened to you or someone you know to show if this is true or not.**

C7: It is true that we are side-lined because some reverends stop us from becoming church leaders like elders and reverends.

C8: Yes, we are side-lined like in our church because they consider us as people without wisdom.

C9: We are sidelined because only men are entitled in taking up leadership roles and not us.

C11: We are sidelined because we are not allowed to become elders and deacons. Men think we were only created to take care of our families.

C12: Yes, we are sidelined because up to now no women in Nkhoma Synod have been ordained as a reverend. We also want to become reverends like our friends in Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods. We are oppressed.

C1: We are not sidelined because we are taking up leadership roles and we are preaching.

C2: At first we were sidelined but we are now not sidelined because we go to the vestry, we preach and are elders.

C3: It is true that in the past women were but we are not sidelined because some are now church elders and deacons.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW WITH MEN CHURCH ELDER ON QUESTION FOUR

E 17: If sidelining has to do with leadership then it is true that women are sidelined because according to our *chilongosoko*¹⁰² women are not entitled to leadership, they are just our helpers.

E18: It is true they are sidelined because just like the Roman Catholics we don't allow women to take up leadership roles.

E19: Women are side-lined in the areas of preaching and leadership because according to our liturgy women are called to play a secondary role in everything.

E13: They were truly sidelined at first but they are now involved in preaching and training at Chongoni.

E14: Women are now not sidelined because they are involved in all areas of the church for example, eldership and deaconship. I saw with my own eyes a woman preaching.

E15: They are not sidelined because of the leadership roles they have attained with the only exception of reverend.

E16: They are not sidelined because they take leading roles in other areas like *Chigwirizano cha amai*; *Mase*¹⁰³ committee, choir, social work etc.

¹⁰² Chilongosoko is more like church liturgy which the church follows. This liturgy is documented in what is called 'zolahulira which is partly comprised of rules and regulations of the Synod. Since most Christians don't know what is documented in this liturgy, some men church elders and reverends utilizes their ignorance to deceive many Christians by saying that church liturgy does not allow women leaders.

¹⁰³ Mase is the house where the reverends stay at the church. So in this case, mase committee is the group set aside deliberately to look into the affairs of the reverend.

E20: The truth is that we don't sideline women because we involve them in other church organization like the orphan program, church development etc.

E19: It is not easy to decide whether women are being sidelined or not because it all depends on how one defines the term 'sidelined'. If the absence of women in leadership role and preaching is defined as side-lining then it is another thing otherwise the Bible, and not the Synod or anybody else clearly states that all the 72 disciples, thereafter the 12 disciples were all men and women. Women should not be reverends or elders, from Genesis to Revelation there is no women minister.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW WITH REVERENDS ON QUESTION FOUR

R22: It is true that they are sidelined especially in the area of leadership position. This started with our first missionaries who never recruited women in their leadership position.

R22: It is unfortunate that some of our leaders sideline women from different leadership position. I think time has come for such type of leaders to change their attitude towards women by accommodating them.

R23: I have a very vivid example where my fellow reverend admonished me to be very careful with *mazelazela*¹⁰⁴ of ordaining women as leaders of the church because once we start with one woman, next will be vestry full of them. Hence it will be easy for them to subdue or overpower us. It is therefore wise to not elect them at all.

R25: It is true they are sidelined because there is still a hot debate as to whether women should take up leadership roles in the Synod. Some congregations have women elders and deacons while some don't have. Women want to be reverends but they are afraid to voice out their desire. As a result up to now, there are no women reverends.

R21: It is not true that CCAP Nkhoma Synod sideline or oppresses women. The people should accuse God if at all women are sidelined; He is the One who is wrong, if He has ever been wrong.

R24: Women are not sidelined because so far I have never heard women complaining of being sidelined. But if however they are sidelined then it is not the Synod but the word of God. By ordaining women as leaders is more of condoning to secularism.

R21: The CCAP Nkhoma Synod is not sidelining women but it is the scripture. All the disciples of Jesus were men; why did He not choose six women and six men? By side-lining women the Synod is just following the foot-steps of Jesus. Even after the dismissal of Judas Iscariot, the Bible says, "Let us choose someone among the men"

¹⁰⁴ It is a term referring to any strange doctrine which was not there during the first missionaries.

and not ‘women’. By not giving women leadership roles, it doesn’t mean they are oppressed; they have their own roles.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF *CHIGWIRIZANO CHA AMAI* ON QUESTION FIVE.

Interviewer: **Do you think Nkhoma Synod is divided on the issue of having women in the leadership position? If so, why do you think is that the case and how would you describe your own position. Can you tell a story to motivate why you choose this position?**

C1: The Synod is divided because some congregations have women leaders while some don’t have.

C2: Yes, it is divided because there are some elders and reverends that are not in support of women leadership.

C3: The Synod is divided on the issue of women leadership because of the way missionaries presented the gospel.

C4: Yes, there is a division on this idea because there are leaders who refuse women leadership while some support it.

C5: Nkhoma Synod is divided on the women leadership issue because in some congregations women are ordained as elders and deacons while in other congregations women are silenced.

C12: The Synod per say is not divided but the people are the ones who are divided.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH MEN ELDER ON QUESTION FIVE.

E14: Yes it is divided because there are some congregations which are ordaining women as leaders.

E15: The Synod is divided because some Nkhoma Synod congregations are just photocopying the Pentecostals who allow women leadership.

E18: There is division because we are told that in some congregations women are elders and deacons, something which is a myth here in m congregation.

E20: It is true that the Synod divided on the issue because we have women elders and deacons in my church but my neighbour congregation is strict on the women.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW WITH REVERENDS ON QUESTION FIVE.

R22: Yes, as of now Nkhoma Synod is divided because in other congregations women are elected while in other congregations are not.

R23: There is division because some reverends are challenging women leadership in their congregations, saying it is unbiblical while at the same time some reverends have in their congregations women leaders.

R24: Western knowledge has divided our Synod because some congregations in town are electing women as leaders supporting the topic of gender equality, something we will not tolerate.

R25: The Synod is indeed divided because some churches accommodate women leadership while some don't. This division is as a result of the way some leaders interpret 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-34.

R25: There is a division because some reverends are openly challenging women leadership in their congregation while some reverends are encouraging women leadership.

R21: There is no division in the Synod, except the difference of interest. Some are interested with women ordination while some are not interested.

R22: The Synod is not divided at all only that we have not yet had enough time to discuss this issue. This has resulted in having every minister or church elder deciding the women leadership issue on his own understanding and applying that understanding in his congregation.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW WITH MEMBERS OF *CHIGWIRIZANO CHA AMAI* ON QUESTION SIX.

Interviewer: **How do you think the context (at home, school and in your community) affects your understanding of the role of women and girls?**

C4: In the community it is woman's duty to work hard in order to make sure that the family is well fed and well taken care of.

C5: In the community, it is women who are hard workers; they go to the garden, cook for the family, and take care of the children while men are just playing draft or are resting.

C6: Children grow up in a context where boys do different tasks from girls'. Boys are taught to cut trees, slash grass while girls are given jobs like cooking, sweeping fetching water etc.

C7: The way we give jobs to our children at home has affected the way of our understanding. We give boys tasks that demand enough energy and those of less energy goes to girls.

C8: Women do their chores at home like cooking, fetching firewood, washing and caring for the children.

C1: When a child is growing up parents, friends and relatives buy toys according to the sex of the child. If she is a baby girl they would buy a baby toy with a small plate and spoon for feeding the baby as for the boy, they will buy him a toy car, gun etc.

C2: Upon the birth of the baby, relatives and friends would ask first before actually buying any cloth. A baby girl will be dressed in pink and a baby boy in blue.

C3: Girls are meant for home management therefore it is necessary to prepare them in advance by buying toys, materials etc which predicts what the future will be like.

C9: Girls are failures but boys are successful.

C10: Boys are bright and sharp but girls are dull and passive.

C11: Men in the home down play women so in the same way at the church.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH MEN ELDERS ON QUESTION SIX.

E16: The culture has contributed in the way we give our task at home because hereafter these children will try to emulate what they were taught while still young.

E17: The way we give jobs at home to our children has had a very big effect because children grow with the mentality of the specified tasks assigned to them while still young.

E18: Children are given work at school according to the sex.

E13: Parents tend to buy toys like gun car, etc for boys and buys small babies, cooking pots etc for a girl child.

E14: In a classroom boys are portrayed as fighters, winners etc.

E15: At home, the husband gives directives to the wife and children so when he goes to church he treats women in the same manner.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW WITH REVERENDS ON QUESTION SIX

R25: The issue behind is culture; so children grow up with what their parents do, for example women go to the maize mill, fetch water and firewood etc. In these plays, women take girls and not boys. In the same way men, they take boys to the bush to kill animals for relish, go to the garden to cut trees etc.

R24: Women at home are entitled to cooking, washing, bearing children, being submissive, etc and men are entitled to decision making, commanding, etc.

R23: It is amazing to see the types of toys parents buys for their children. You will never see them buying a gun and car toy for a girl; they will do that for a boy child. For the girls thy will buy a baby toy with her clothes, plates, cooking pots etc.

R22: Children from a tender age are exposed to speeches like: If they are talking to a boy child they will say, “Don’t cry like a woman” and to the girl, they will say, sit like a woman. (R22)

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF *CHIGWIRIZANO CHA AMAI* ON QUESTION SEVEN

Interviewer: **Explain how the environment in Sunday school and catechumen classes have contributed to the way you perceive women and men in terms of their teaching and leadership roles.**

C1: Women are the ones who are good teachers of Sunday.

C5: It is the group of women who are involved in teaching children in Sunday school.

C6: Although the majority of Sunday school teachers are women but many stories taught in these schools depict men figures like Joseph, Moses, etc.

C8: There is not much difference on how a boy child and a girl child is treated in Sunday schools.

C10: It seems both girls and boys are treated equally.

C12: Both men and women are allowed to teach in Sunday schools. Both men and women; boys and girls are teaching Sunday school.

C2: It is hard to understand that many men opt for catechumen than Sunday school.

C3: Even though both girls and boys learn together but in terms of sitting plan, girls have their own place demarcated from boys.

C4: Many teachers of catechumen class are men or adult boys and not women.

C11: Beside men there are still women teaching in catechumen class, the only difference with Sunday school is that girls are not allowed to sit together with boys.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH MEN ELDERS ON QUESTION SEVEN

E13: We have more women teachers teaching in Sunday school in CCAP Nkhoma Synod than men. During this time all children sit together regardless of which sex.

E15: Since more teachers in Sunday school are more than men, many girls also aspire in becoming Sunday school teachers when they grow up.

E16: In Sunday school, both boys and girls are taught together. This helps them to see that before God they are all equal.

E17: In Sunday school, there is not much difference, on how both girls and boys are treated; they are all treated equally.

E19: Both men and women are teaching in Sunday schools, there isn't any criteria given to support only one group of sex.

E14: In Sunday schools all children sit together but things change when in catechumen, since they are now grown up they need to sit separately.

E16: According to our culture, boys and girls are sited separately in every forum, including catechumen and church service.

E18: Men believe that teaching Sunday school is of low status; therefore most of them opt for catechumen.

E19: Both Sunday school and catechumen class are taught by both women and men. Girls are advised during counselling session to sit separately in catechumen class and even during church service.

E20: The system of girls and boys sitting separately during catechumen classes started long time ago during our first missionaries.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH REVERENDS ON QUESTION SEVEN

R22: There isn't much difference in the way girls and boys are treated in Sunday school.

R23: Children in Sunday schools are equally taught but the only difference is in the area of teachers where the majorities are women or adult girls.

R24: There is no difference in Sunday school, all children sit together; without separating girls from the boys.

R25: Both men and women; boys and girls are teaching Sunday school.

R21: There are very few women involved in teaching catechumen as compared to those teaching in Sunday school.

R23: Since catechumen class is comprised of grown up girls and boys, and sometimes even married people, it is wise to engage male teachers.

R24: It is not always easy for women to teach catechumen, theirs is Sunday school.

R25: It seems both Sunday school and catechumen are taught equally.

SAMPLE INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF *CHIGWIRIZANO CHA AMAI* ON, MEN CHURCH ELDERS AND REVERENDS ON QUESTION EIGHT.

Interviewer: **If the opportunity is given to change the status of women in the church, how best do you think this should be done?**

C1: Women need also to become reverends because our friends in the south have women reverends and women session clerks.

C2: For a long time women have been oppressed by not taking up leadership roles but we can foresee now becoming reverends.

C3: Women should also be empowered by taking the leadership role of a reverend.

C4: I want by God's help that women should become reverends because they too have that gift.

C5: I am of the view that the time has come for us to become reverends.

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C2: For a long time women have been oppressed by not taking up leadership roles but we can foresee now becoming reverends.

C3: Women should also be empowered by taking the leadership role of a reverend.

C4: I want by God's help that women should become reverends because they too have that gift.

C5: I am of the view that the time has come for us to become reverends.

C1: Women leaders need to go through some Bible trainings in order to be in a position of being able to interpret the Bible like what Veritas College¹⁰⁵ does.

C3: There is no way we can be empowered without first going through training. Therefore I propose training to be done.

C5: Women should attend literacy classes so that they can be empowered.

C4: Women in leadership position should be born again; people filled with the Holy Spirit.

C6: Just as men; women leaders should be chosen on the criteria that they are full of the Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:1-4).

¹⁰⁵ Veritas College Malawi is an organization that specializes in lay leadership development; their focus is on contextual exegesis, application and communication. Women are the majority in the training in different churches including the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod.

C7: In the same manner that the Holy Spirit came on all of those in the upper room, so now the Holy Spirit needs to be on all women leaders.

E13: I believe, after accepting women to be elders and deacons, am of the view that they should also become reverends.

E14: It is important to train women in order to empower them as leaders of the church.

E15: The church should involve women in trainings like that of Veritas so that they should be acquainted with the Bible.

E16: Many women are illiterate, it is therefore crucial for them to start attending adult literacy classes.

E16: If they want to elect the woman as an elder or deacon then the husband too should also be elected so that both of them should be leaders. This is especially important during church visits so that they should be travelling together unlike travelling with a man church elder who is not the husband.

R24: I am of the view that women should become reverends because it is God who ordains people and not man.

R25: The work of The Lord is just too much to be done by just one group of men; women should be ordained as reverends as one way of overcoming the shortage of reverends in our Synod.

R24: The key to leadership role is education; without it women leadership will just be a nightmare. I would therefore encourage women to attain at least a basic education or training.

R25: The Synod should open doors for women theological training for there are many women who aspire to do theology but there is no provision for them.

R21: From the Old Testament up to now you will never find a woman Levite or woman pries. This has never happened and we don't want it to happen; therefore our Synod should not confuse women leadership and women ministry. God through Paul does not allow women leadership; therefore I would suggest that the ordaining of women elders and deacons should stop. Women should instead be encouraged to continue with their *Chigwirizano cha amai*.

C8: I would have loved that women too should become elders and deacons.

C9: The church should accept women elders and deacons because in some areas of Nkhoma Synod they already have women elders and deacons.

C10: Women should also become elders and deacons and thereafter reverends.

C11: The Synod has to change by also allowing women to become elders and deacons and not just confining them with the kitchen work.

C12: The congregation should allow women to take up leadership roles.

E17: Women should be equally treated like men in the leadership roles. They should be accepted and respected as human beings and not stigmatizing them.

E18: Women have to go through training before attaining any leadership role.

E19: One of the condition of an elder or deacon even for men is being in a position of knowing how to read and write. Therefore I encourage women to go for adult literacy classes.

R22: Women, who feel they have been called to be church leaders and preachers should go ahead and attain them failing which God will be angry with us.

C11: We are failures, I don't think there is any way our status can change; let men be leaders and not us. We should remain the way we are.

C12: It's true that in other congregations women are taking up leadership roles (e.g. elders and deacons). This is a Chinese type of leadership and not from God.¹⁰⁶

E17: The church of God is run differently from the way the world runs. Worldly things can change anytime and anyhow but not godly things. The word of God does not change then how can we change the status of women by empowering them to become leaders.

E18: Heavenly things don't change, thus a fact! So changing the status of women would be like fighting against God.

E19: I think it should suffice women that they have *Chigwirizano cha amai* and therefore should leave men alone with leadership roles.

E20: Where else in the Bible have you heard about women leadership?

R21: The status of women in the church cannot be changed, if any, and then it will be God Himself changing their status. Their status cannot change because they are women and they will remain women.

¹⁰⁶ Since many Chinese materials which are being sold in Malawi are not durable and not lasting, people have nicknamed any fake or not durable thing as Chinese. So in this case, women leadership is referred to as Chinese for two reasons: (1) They think it is not from God; (2) They think it will not last for long.

R22: It is not an issue of oppressing women by not electing them as leaders but it is an issue of being obedient to God's word. Therefore, women's status shouldn't change.

R22: I believe the word of God is above everything, therefore we shouldn't be conformed to the world's pattern; instead our minds should be renewed by God's word. The world should not pressurize us to condone to women leadership.

ANNEXURE 3: NKHOMA SYNOD PERMISSION LETTER



CCAP NKHOMA SYNOD

P.O BOX 45 NKHOMA, LILONGWE, MALAWI

265-995355090/265-997957801. ccapnkhomasynod89@gmail.com

5th January, 2012

The Research Ethics Committee (REC)
University OF Stellenbosch,
Cape Town.
Republic of South Africa.

Dear Sir/madam,

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT IN THE CCAP NKHOMA SYNOD

I write to inform you that Phoebe Faith Chifungo, has been duly authorized to carry out a research project within the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Her research entitled " **Women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod: A Practical Theological Study of their Leadership roles**" is a very important and relevant subject for our synod, because there has been many questions and debate about the role of women in our Church. We believe therefore that her research will be of great help to our synod and our congregations in particular.

We therefore ask you to help her whenever necessary and we are wishing her all the best as she carries out her research project.

Yours Faithfully,

REV VASCO KACHIPAPA BANDA
GENERAL SECRETARY



ANNEXURE 4: INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL LETTER



UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

Approval Notice
Stipulated documents/requirements

11-Dec-2013
Chifungo, Phoebe F
Victoria Street
Stellenbosch
Stellenbosch, WC

Proposal #: HS798/2012

Title: Women in the CCAP Nkhama Synod: A practical theological study of their leadership roles

Dear Ms Phoebe Chifungo,

Your Stipulated documents/requirements received on 06-Apr-2013, was reviewed by members of the Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Expedited review procedures on 11-Dec-2013 and was approved.
Sincerely,

Susara Oberholzer
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

ANNEXURE 5: ETHICS CLEARANCE FORM FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH



UNIVERSITEIT-STELENBOSCH-UNIVERSITY
jou kennisennoot • your knowledge partner

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE: HUMAN RESEARCH (HUMANIORA) ETHICS COMMITTEE APPLICATION FORM

Application to the University of Stellenbosch RESEARCH ETHICS
COMMITTEE: HUMAN RESEARCH (HUMANIORA)
for clearance of new/revised research projects

This application must be typed or written in capitals

Name: MRS PHOEBE FAITH CHIFUNGO

Position/Professional Status: Student

Affiliation: Research Programme/Institution / Department: Stellenbosch University,
Faculty of Theology, Department of Practical Theology and Missiology.

Please indicate (✓) if you are a registered student at SU?

YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, for which degree/programme are you registered?

Doctor of Theology

Please specify the relevant Department at SU: Department of Practical Theology
and Missiology.

Who is your supervisor? Dr Nell and Prof Mouton (co-promoter)

Your telephone and extension no. Code: 265 no.999340242

Title of research project: (*Do not use abbreviations*)
*Women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod: A Practical Theological study of their
leadership roles.*

Where will the research be carried out?
In Malawi, Nkhoma Synod

All the following sections must be completed (Please tick all relevant boxes where applicable)

1. FUNDING OF THE RESEARCH: How will the research be funded?

Part of it will be funded by the DRC here in South Africa. I have also applied for the OSP bursary. I will also use part of my salary.

2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

To find out if the absence of women in leadership roles in Nkhoma synod is as a result of biblical, historical or cultural influence.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH: *(Please list objectives)*

1. To identify and analyze the historical factors that have affected the church's interpretation of women's roles.
2. To look at how the cultural influence have controlled the church's way of thinking towards women in leadership position.
3. To see if the CCAP, Nkhoma synod's position on the issue of women in leadership position is due to its interpretation of the Bible.

4. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH *(give a brief outline of the research plan – not more than 200 words. Include who will do what, when, where and for how long to gather data.)*

The research will use a qualitative empirical method. Interviews and focus groups will be used to gather the data. The data collection process is planned to start in May ,2012(later than initially planned) if clearance is granted by the Research Ethics committee: Human Research. Time allocation for different stages will be as follows:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| a. Pilot Study: | 1-2 weeks |
| b. Data Collection: | 1-2 months |
| c. Data analysis, interpretation, Integration and report writing. | 2-3 months |

The principal investigator for this project will be the undersigned (Phoebe Chifungo) with the help of two investigators (Monica Chayang'anamuno and Emily Mwale) who will mainly help with the data collection process. These are the people who are members of Nkhoma synod.

5. NATURE AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE RESEARCH

5.1 How should the research be characterized (*Please tick ALL appropriate boxes*)

5.1.1 Personal and social information collected directly from participants/subjects	
5.1.2 Participants/subjects to undergo physical examination	NO
5.1.3 Participants/subjects to undergo psychometric testing	NO
5.1.4 Identifiable information to be collected about people from available records	NO
5.1.5 Anonymous information to be collected from available records	NO
5.1.6 Literature, documents or archival material to be collected on individuals/groups	NO

5.2 Participant/Subject Information Sheet attached? (*for written and verbal consent*)

YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.3 Informed Consent form attached? (*for written consent*)

YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.3.1 If informed consent is not necessary, please state why:

NB: If a questionnaire, interview schedule or observation schedule/framework for ethnographic study will be used in the research, it must be attached. The application cannot be considered if these documents are not included.

5.4 Will you be using any of the above mentioned measurement instruments in the research?

YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

6 PARTICIPANTS/SUBJECTS IN THE STUDY

6.1 If humans are being studied, state where they are selected:

From the congregations of Nkhoma synod, central region of Malawi. They will be studied within their natural environment.

6.2 Please mark (✓) the appropriate boxes:

Participants/subjects will:	YES	NO
be asked to volunteer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
be selected	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6.2.1 State how the participants/subjects will be selected, and/or who will be asked to volunteer:

Those in key leadership positions in the synod (e.g reverends, church elders) will be asked to participate, while as lay people –men and women will be randomly asked to volunteer using quota and deviant sampling method. The groups will be asked by the researcher to read and sign the consent form if they agree.

6.2.2. Please mark (✓) the appropriate boxes:

Participants/subjects are:	YES	NO
Will SU student, alumni of staff data be used in this research		✓
Will interviews be conducted with SU student, alumni of staff		✓
Will questionnaires be used and distributed on SU campuses		✓
Will electronic questionnaires be placed on the SU website?		✓

6.3 Are the participants/subjects subordinate to the person doing the recruiting?

YES	
NO	✓

6.3.1 If yes, justify the selection of subordinate participants / subjects:

6.4 Will control participants/subjects be used?

YES	
NO	✓

6.4.1 If yes, explain how they will be selected:

6.5 What records, if any, will be used, and how will they be accessed? Have you obtained formal permission to use these records?

No records will be used.

6.6 What is the age range of the participants/subjects in the study?

Between 25 and 40

6.6.1 Was consent from guardians/parents obtained for participants/subjects 17 years and younger?

YES	
NO	✓

If YES, please attach the appropriate forms.

6.6.2 If NO, please state why:

Because the age range of the participants in the study is above 18.

6.7 Will participation or non-participation disadvantage the participants/subjects in any way?

YES	
NO	✓

6.7.1 If yes, explain in what way:

6.8 Will the research benefit the participants/subjects in any direct way?

YES	✓
NO	

6.8.1 If yes, please explain in what way:

They will have the original information of how people view women in leadership position in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod

7. PROCEDURES

7.1 Mark research procedure(s) that will be used:

Literature	✓
Documentary	
Personal records	
Interviews	✓
Survey	
Participant observation	
Other (please specify)	✓
Focus Groups	

7.2 How will the data be stored to keep it safe and prevent unauthorized access?
What happens to the data on completion of the research?

The information will be stored in my laptop where no one can have the access to the information since it will have the password known to myself only and the data collected will be discarded after completion of research. Only results will be kept.

7.3 If an interview form/schedule; questionnaire or observation schedule/framework will be used, is it attached?

YES	✓
NO	

7.4 Risks of the procedure(s): Participants/subjects will/may suffer:

No risk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Discomfort	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pain	<input type="checkbox"/>
Possible complications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Persecution	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stigmatization	<input type="checkbox"/>
Negative labeling	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

7.4.1 If you have checked any of the above except "no risk", please provide details:
 There will be no any risk involved because the subject matter is not a new issue in the Nkhoma Synod.

RESEARCH PERIOD

(a) When will the research commence:

Empirical research will commence in May, 2012 if clearance is granted.

(b) Over what approximate time period will the research be conducted:

Over the period of 6 months

9. GENERAL

9.1 Has permission of relevant authority/ies been obtained?

YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

9.1.1 If yes, state name/s of authority/ies:

1. The moderator of Nkhoma Synod
2. The Group Village Headmen

9.2 Confidentiality: How will confidentiality be maintained to ensure that participants/subjects/patients/controls are not identifiable to persons not involved in the research:

By not revealing any name in any published material. Subjects will only be referred in general terms e.g. women guild, church elder, Mr X etc.

9.3 Results: To whom will results be made available, and how will the findings be reported to the research participants?

Results will be available to Stellenbosch University and the participants in the study. The findings will be reported to the research participants through a private meeting where all the participants will be asked to attend.

ANNEXURE 6: GROUP VILLAGE HEADMAN 1 PERMISSION FORM

Dzuwa Group Village Headman,
C/O P.O. Box 44,
Nkhoma.


The University of Stellenbosch,
The Ethical Department,
Stellenbosch.

Dear Sir,

AUTHORIZATION OF CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN MY AREA.

I, Group village Headman, Dzuwa write to inform you that Mrs Phoebe Chifungo has been accepted to conduct her research in my area. There is completely no problem. We believe it will even be to our benefit as a village.

Kind regards,

G.V.H. Dzuwa 

Mr Dzuwa

Group Village Headman.



ANNEXURE 7: GROUP VILLAGE 2 PERMISSION FORM

Madzumbi Group Village Headman,
C/O P.O. Box 44,
Nkhoma.

The University of Stellenbosch,
The Ethical Department,
Stellenbosch.

Dear Sir,

AUTHORIZATION OF CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN MY AREA.

I, Group village Headman, Madzumbi write to inform you that Mrs Phoebe Chifungo has been accepted to conduct her research in my area. There is completely no problem. We believe it will even be to our benefit as a village.

Kind regards,



Mr Madzumbi

Group Village Headman.



ANNEXURE 8: SOME OF THE STORIES EXTRACTED FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE ESPECIALLY QUESTIONS 1-5.

You are at a gathering and a person asks you about the current relationship between women and the church leadership (decision makers, for example, reverends, elders and deacons). What story would you tell about something that has happened to you or a friend you know to illustrate this relationship?

The relationship is not good. I am saying this because of what happened to my church. When the Synod decided on the leadership of women in the areas of church elders and deaconess; first of all the reverend did not announce it in the church. When we saw our neighboring congregations having women leaders, we asked the reverend and church elders why our congregation does not have women leaders. The church leadership tried to resist but women and some men fought hard through prayers and deliberations and now we have few women leaders. (C4)

The relationship is not good. Let me narrate to you what happened at my church; even though the Synod accepted women to become leaders, but my reverend and church elders openly resisted the decision. They even went to the media where they announced their stand of against women leadership. Up to now there is no any woman church elder or a deaconess. (C12)

At my congregation there is a good relationship. Let me tell you a story which took place last year during the women's annual conference. When women had a short fall in their budget, the session decided to cover up this short fall by giving them the money they wanted. (E13)

I cannot say the relationship is good or bad but it is either way because the determining factor is the type of the reverend and church leadership. Let me tell you a story that happen in my congregation; when our church was led by reverend X¹⁰⁷ we had women leaders but when he was transferred his predecessor openly declared to stop women leadership because it is against the Bible. (C12)

¹⁰⁷ For ethical reasons the interviewee preferred not to mention the name of the reverend directly but to identify him as reverend X.

We are talking about how women are being treated in the church community. Please tell me a story of what you know of how the first missionaries presented the gospel and the effect it has on the treatment of women today. Please give some examples.

Let me tell you what happened during the time of reverend A. Murray and reverend T.C.B Vlok. There was no any woman leader. These were our spiritual leaders who brought Christianity here in our area. If our missionaries saw it as unbiblical to engage women in leadership roles why should it be that we should now start ordaining women? (R21)

My grandfather told me a story that none of the first missionaries' wives was a reverend or a church elder. He said most of them were involved in social work and home management. It is not a surprise now that reverend's wives at Yoswa women's school are mainly equipped in the areas of home management like cookery, sawing and the role of pastor's wife. (E19)

One day I had the opportunity of chatting with one of the old influential retired reverend. Then we started discussing the present situation of our Synod; he vividly shed tears and he mourned for the Synod, in the way some reverends and church elders are behind the issue of women leadership. He said things were not like this in the days of Andrew Murray and his colleagues from the Dutch Reformed Church. We are the Dutch, he emphasized, as he was trying to gather some strengthens (since he was crying); and therefore we need to preserve the doctrine we inherited from our fore spiritual fathers from Cape Town. (R22)

Some of the people in your community are stating that women are being sidelined in leadership roles in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod. Can you think of a story which happened to you or someone you know to show if this is true or not?

It is true that women are sidelined. Let me explain to you a story of what happened at my congregation. It was a time of calling a new reverend; we as members of Chigwirizano cha amai and the whole congregation were asked to pray and fast so that God should provide us with the reverend of His heart but when it came to the

actual day of deciding who to call, none of us women participated in the exercise of decision making. (C7)

It is not true that women are sidelined in Nkhoma synod. Allow me to give you my own story. When the Synod decided on women leadership I was among the first very few women to be ordained as a church elder and I am still a serving church elder. I also have a friend in the Chigwirizano cha amai who is a deputy session clerk. (C1)

I as a reverend am of the view that Nkhoma Synod does not sideline women. Here is my argument: If the basis of your question is on the leadership of women, then it is God and not the Synod sidelining women. I am saying this because it is His Word which says that women should not take up leadership position, they remain quiet. (R3)

Do you think the Nkhoma Synod is divided on the issue of having women in the position of leadership? If so, why do you think this is the case and how would you describe your own position? Can you tell a story to motivate why you choose this position?

It is true that my Synod is divided, I am a living story. I as a church elder last year I witnessed a hot debate during the session on whether our congregation should have women leaders to the extent that some said they will quit the church once the church agrees to start ordaining women. (E15)

It is true that our Synod is divided. Let me tell you a story which took place among the reverends this year. When some reverends discovered that some congregations especially in urban were still ordaining women as church elders and deacons even after a stop order given during last years' synodical meeting, they decided to write a pastoral letter in which among other concerns was the concern of women leadership that it should stop. (E18)

There is division in our Synod in as far as the issue of women leadership is concerned. I testified this division during the main women's guild conference at Chongoni. Among the questions which were tabled was: should the leadership of

women continue or not? The answers from the women indicated mixed reaction in that some were for women leadership while some were against. (C2)